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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 396. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 1ST, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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No. 1	3	0	by	6	0	5	6	9	0
,, 2	3	0	,,	7	6	7	0	11	6
,, 3	3	0	,,	9	0	8	6	13	6
,, 4	3	10	,,	7	6	8	9	13	9
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,, 9	3	15	by	9	0	14	3	22	6
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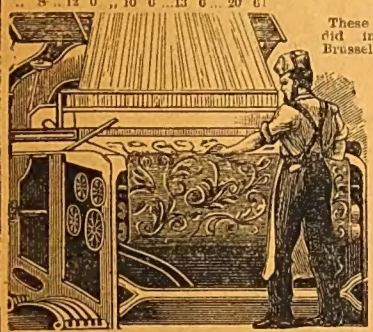

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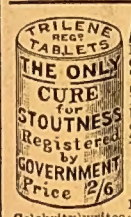

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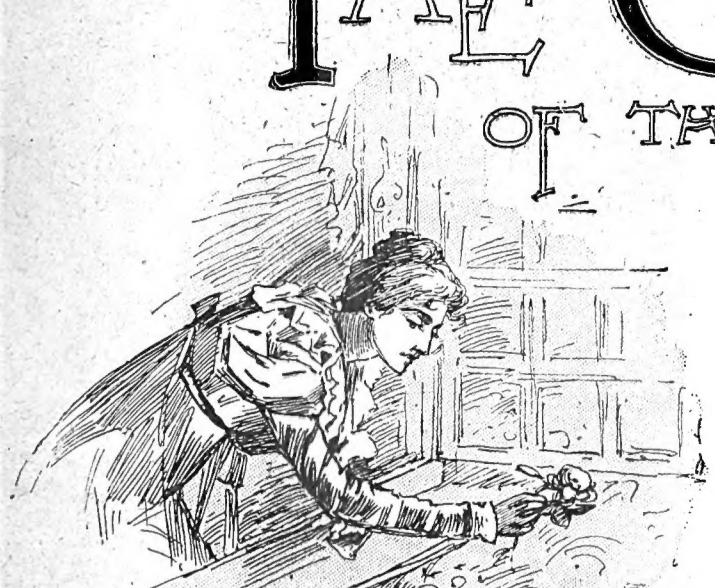
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 396.] For the Week ending August 1st, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

THE CURSE OF THE BELL



Should a babe be born by the church-side near,
When the Passing Bell is toll'd,
Lo! a curse on its life will cling and fall,
Nor broken by prayer—nor gold!

OLD SUPERSTITION.

SOLEMNLY the Passing Bell began to toll, its muffled note sounding clear in the summer air.

The nurse moved across the room and closed the window of the sick chamber hastily, as she did so a feeble wail came from the bed.

She took the child up in her arms tenderly. "Poor little mite, poor little thing!" she said. "Will it live?" she asked the doctor curiously.

"Live, woman! of course it will; it is as strong a baby as I have seen," he answered testily. "I wish I could say as much for the mother."

The nurse sighed.

"Then the Curse of the Bell will be on it," she muttered, as she stilled its wailing cry.

* * * * *

Stella Fairfield opened her window and looked out; the sun was streaming across the Rectory garden, throwing the shadow of the belfry tower from the adjacent church across the mossy lawn.

rights reserved.]

As she stood there smiling, a girl with a roll of music under her arm came out from the porch into the sunlight.

"Where are you going?" cried Stella, leaning out to pluck a rose.

"To the church. I am going to practise; I do not want to be in the way, you know. Roger will be here directly, I suppose?"

Stella laughed merrily and threw the rose at her cousin as she crossed the lawn.

"I believe you are afraid of him, Mona," she cried to the retreating figure. "You always try to run away when he comes."

The girl had slipped into the shadow cast by the belfry, and Stella did not see the colour flood her usually pale cheeks.

A step in the room behind made Stella turn abruptly.

"Why, nurse, have you come to wish me many happy returns? I thought you had forgotten that to-day is my birthday."

"No, miss, I had not forgotten," the old woman answered as she looked from the window across to the still churchyard.

"Then have you no greetings?" the girl began, but a cry from the nurse checked her.

Across the summer air came the solemn toll of a bell.

"Shut your ears, dearie, don't listen; I will close the window quick."

The girl laughed.

"How silly you are, that is for poor old Jimmy the sexton. Did you not know he was dead?"

The old woman closed the window with shaking hands.

"To-day of all days," she muttered.

Then she sat down on the window seat and covered her face with her hands.

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"The curse, the curse is coming," she moaned.

"But, Nannie," the girl broke in, "you have heard that bell so often, you never minded it before."

"It has not tolled on the 15th of June for twenty years, Miss Stella. When last I heard it——"

"I know," again interrupted the girl, then she went to the window and opened it once more.

"Poor mother!" she said softly, and she too looked out at the still churchyard.

The nurse shook her head feebly.

"It's the living, not the dead I was thinking of," she said, but Stella did not hear, she was gazing up at the belfry.

"There is to be a wedding to-day, and we are all going up to the belfry when the bells ring. Roger says it 's such fun."

The old nurse started up in alarm.

"Don't, Miss Stella, don't go up there to-day, you will come to harm for the bell is spiteful——"

She broke off, for the Rector was heard calling his daughter.

"I expect Roger has come," Stella cried; and, breaking away from the detaining hand of the old woman she ran light-heartedly downstairs.

"The curse, the curse is coming."

Stella Fairfield was an only child, her mother had died at her birth, and she had grown up the spoilt darling of her father, and the idol of her nurse's heart. When she was sixteen, her father, thinking it bad for a girl to grow up without the companionship of those of her own sex and age had sent for her cousin Mona, one of a large family and therefore easily spared; the two girls lived happily together, the one light-hearted, impulsive, and passionate, with the strong feelings of her Spanish blood (her mother had been of that race), the other quiet, cold, self-effacing and some said feelingless.

And now into Stella's life had come a new joy. Her old playmate and neighbour, Roger Thorlay, had asked her to be his wife, and before long the old church bells would ring their merry peal for her.

But now and then a cloud had dimmed her sunlight, a vague, uneasy feeling filled her heart; it was hardly jealousy—and yet—and yet——

Why did Roger consult Mona so often? It was to Mona he went for advice and help, to Mona he unfolded his plans and hopes. She was no longer a child to be played with and petted; she had Roger's laughter and caresses, but to Mona he took his troubles and asked for sympathy.

She could scarcely formulate her feelings. "It is because we both love you so," Roger said, when she had upbraided him for consulting Mona about her future, and his answer had silenced her.

As the first peal of wedding bells rang out, Stella skipped up the belfry stairs, humming a wedding march, Roger and Mona following.

Suddenly the footsteps behind her ceased and Stella stopped to listen.

"I cannot go on. Leave me, I am giddy; go without me. Don't think of me, dear Roger."

Dear Roger! The colour flamed into Stella's face, and she called out sharply:

"Come along, Mona, I will give you a hand. Come with us."

Roger stood aside as Stella came bounding back; she seized her cousin's hand angrily and pulled her up the winding stairs. At last they reached the belfry floor. Stella opened the door and drew Mona in with her.

"Come along," she cried as the other drew back. "What are you afraid of?"

"It is so dark, and it looks so dreadful down there. I feel as if I should fall."

"Nonsense, I have your hand tightly," Stella answered with a laugh. "I did not know you were a coward before. See, the bells are beginning again."

Mona gave a scream.

"Take me away, take me away. I shall throw myself

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down. I shall go mad! Stop them! stop those bells, Stella!"

Stella gave her companion a look of contempt, and, pushing her against the wall, walked steadily along the narrow platform to where the largest bell was hung.

She stood looking up at it with a strange feeling of impending misery and pain.

Suddenly she reeled and almost fell. Across the swaying bells she had looked at Mona. Roger was standing by her side. She saw Mona's outstretched hands, then the great bell came between, and when she looked again, Mona was clasped in Roger's arms.

For one second she stood hot and trembling, then she sprang across to Roger's side, struck the white face of Mona a stinging blow with her hands, and tore madly down the belfry tower, across the Rectory garden, and up into her own room.

When there, she threw herself on the bed, but no relieving tears came; she sprang up and paced the room angrily.

"She loves him," she muttered, "I saw it, and he held her in his arms. I hate her! I hate her!" the words came in short gasps, passion and jealousy were raging in her heart, and she tore at her slender fingers in mingled rage and pain.

Down the dark belfry stairs came Roger Thorley, a girl's limp form in his arms. He, too, crossed the churchyard, and, carrying his burden, deposited it on a seat almost beneath Stella's window.

His voice was curt and harsh as he summoned aid.

"What is the matter?" asked the old nurse who bustled up at his call.

"Mona has fainted! Poor child, she was nearly mad with terror. Stella has behaved disgracefully."

The last words floated up through the open window and reached Stella's ears. She bit her finger until it bled.

"What did she do?"

"Dragged her up to the belfry against her will."

"I didn't," muttered Stella, as the words came up, "I only told her Roger would laugh at her if she was frightened."

Then she moved nearer to the window: "She fainted; had I not caught her, she would have fallen."

Stella began to laugh mirthlessly.

"Into his arms; yes, I saw her. I hate her!" she muttered.

Presently the Rector's voice was heard. "Stella, I want you immediately."

His voice, too, was hard and stern. Stella shivered; never in all her life had she heard her father speak like that to her.

She turned the key in the door and remained obstinately silent.

Presently there was a tap at the door. "Mr. Roger wants to see you, dearie," said her nurse.

Stella did not answer, the anger in her face had not died down, and she could not see him yet.

"Leave her alone, nurse. I would rather not see her; her behaviour has both shocked and surprised me," she heard Roger saying.

A choking sob rose in her throat; but she changed it to a hard, bitter laugh.

"Go and comfort Mona," she cried as she listened to the retreating footsteps.

All the next day Roger Thorley did not come, though Stella watched and waited for him anxiously.

Then she heard that he had called early in the morning to ask after Mona and leave her some hot-house grapes.

She turned the key in the lock.

Mona seemed nervous and ill, her fright had affected her system; but Stella did not notice it, she was thinking only of Roger, and the Rector preserved a chilling silence towards his daughter.

The next day and Roger did not come; on the third Stella saw with beating heart his familiar figure crossing the Rectory lawn. She was springing to meet him, but suddenly she drew back, paused a minute, then rushed to her own room instead.

Mona was on the lawn with outstretched hands, crying: "My preserver, how can I thank you?"

All that day Stella did not go down, and her lover waited patiently, reassured by Mona's sympathy and advice.

"Leave her to herself, she will come round; don't write, don't attempt to see her, if you do so her temper will increase. If she submits of her own free will, it will cure her for ever." She advised, and he waited.

A week passed away and Stella grew white and silent, the laughing, bright-eyed girl had gone, the Stella of old days had departed, still she would not see Roger; and Mona, always quiet and gentle, comforted him, and told him how she had failed in her attempts to soften Stella's heart.

Then Stella took to absenting herself, and for hours no one could find her.

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"Mona, my child," said the Rector one afternoon, "will you look for Stella? I want to see her in the study; do not tell her, however, that Roger is with me."

Mona smiled sadly.

"I am afraid I do not know where she is, uncle; I have looked for her so often."

She stood at the door for a few minutes, then she strolled in the direction of the church. She paused at the foot of the belfry tower, then very slowly she began to ascend.

She looked in at the ringer's chamber—it was empty; no bells would be rung to-day. Then she ascended the next flight more boldly.

"Stella," she called softly, "Stella."

"What do you want?" came a sullen reply.

"Come down, Stella, I want to speak to you."

There was no answer.

Mona paused for a few minutes with a curious smile on her face, then she went on up the stairs.

As she gained the belfry room Stella sprang up from the floor.

"What do you want?" she cried angrily. "Go! go away, I came here away from you; I thought you would be too frightened to pursue me here."

Mona looked up at the bells.

"It is their ringing which is terrible. You don't know how frightfully they fascinate me. If I were left alone with them I should go mad, and throw myself down; I could not endure it. I do not mind them now."

"What have you come for?" demanded Stella fiercely.

"To talk to you about Roger," Mona answered calmly.

"But I don't want to talk to you about him, I—I—" —gasping—"don't think I want to see him again."

Mona smiled.

"He says the same thing, too. What foolish children you are."

Stella's eyes blazed ominously.

"What is it you want?" she asked.

Mona looked meditatively at the empty air.

Stella stamped her foot.

"Go away," she said, "I hate the sight of you; don't you think I can see you love Roger?"

"Yes, I love him," said Mona calmly.

"And you would take him away from me?" cried Stella.

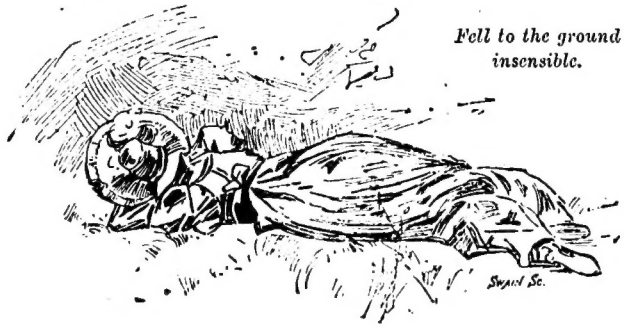
Mona shrugged her shoulders.

"Are you trying so hard to keep him? Do you think sulking and passion likely to prove attractive?"

Stella choked a rising sob.

"I hate you," she muttered.

"I am perfectly aware of that," answered her cousin, 'and at present you are doing your best to make everyone hate *you*."



Fell to the ground insensible.

In the silence which followed Stella threw a half imploring glance at Mona. She was fighting the passion within her. Had Mona opened her arms, and let Stella sob her rage away, the end might have been different; but she only stood with a smile upon her lips, humming Roger's favourite song.

"Then you shall stay here until I choose to let you out," Stella cried, suddenly backing towards the door. Closing it with an angry bang she turned the key in the lock and ran down the steps.

As she ran, Mona's voice reached her, screaming to her to come back, now angrily, now in terror; but she only shook her head, and it grew fainter and fainter in the distance, and at last died away.

Stella ran down the lane by the church and out into the open fields. She walked on with a sense of pain and misery fighting an angry battle with herself.

"Go back and let her out," her better impulse prompted.

"I won't, I mean to punish her; she has made me suffer, let her be frightened."

"What if she should fall?"

"Let her, I don't care," and Stella quickened her footsteps.

"Do you know what you would be if she fell?—a murderess."

"She won't fall, it is only nonsense on her part; I want to frighten her badly. She does not mind if the bells don't ring—I wish they would ring."

"Is there a service to-night? No, to-morrow, she will be all right; I will let her out before supper."

Farther and farther from home went Stella, her anger carrying her at a rapid pace.

Suddenly she paused and stood irresolute.

"There *is* a service to-night; I had forgotten," she exclaimed aloud.

Should she go back or forward? She hesitated, looked behind her, but the church was no longer in sight; then setting her teeth hard she went on again.

"You will be a murderess. You don't care? Yes, you do!"

"I don't," screamed Stella, "how dare you say so!"

"Murderess!"

"I'm not a murderess, I only want to punish Mona."

She stopped again with a gasp. "Was that a bell?"

A vision of Mona's face still and white arose before her; she put out her hands as if to ward it off.

Twice she went on but stopped with a shiver, then very slowly she turned her face homeward; as she did so distant bells rang out.

Stella turned deadly white and began to run. "What had she done? Was she a murderess? Would she be in time? Why, oh, why could she not go faster?" As she ran on and on, her breath came in choking gasps, and in her ears the wind shrieked "*Murderess!*"

She was trembling with fear and exhaustion when she reached the Rectory garden. A few more steps and Mona would be free. Why had she shut her up there? "Mona, forgive me, forgive me!" she gasped as she looked up at the big grey tower.

She would ask Mona's pardon. Never again would she let her anger——

"Good God! What is that?"

Across the lawn something was being carried on a stretcher.

Stella bounded towards it.

It was Mona, still and cold.

Stella clutched at the air convulsively, for the big

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grey tower was going round. She uttered a shrill scream, which turned to a wild, gurgling laugh, and fell to the ground insensible.

* * * * *

When Stella recovered her senses she was in bed, and the room darkened. She lay still, with a curious sense of lightness, regarding her fingers with a puzzled expression, they were so thin and white; then she lifted her hand to her head, a little cry escaped her, her long black hair had gone; she tried to sit up but fell back weakly on the pillow. Presently the sound of the organ came in through the open window. What were they playing? Mona's favourite hymn. Was someone dead? She tried to hum the air.

When our heads are bowed with woe,
When our bitter tears o'erflow.

There was a rustle behind the bed curtains.

"Is that you, Nannie?" asked Stella.

The nurse came from behind the curtain, wiping her eyes surreptitiously.

"Is someone dead, Nannie?"

The nurse shook up Stella's pillow in silence.

"Have I been ill?"

"Yes, dearie, lie still, don't ask questions now." Nannie's voice had a quivering sound.

"Is that Mona playing?" Stella asked presently.

The old woman gave a sudden start at Stella's words and let the cup she held fall from her fingers with a crash on to the floor.

A perplexed frown deepened on Stella's brow.

"Where is Mona? I want her," she said fretfully.

Then she looked at Nannie.

"Mona, I have come to save you!"

"What are you crying about?" she screamed. "Tell me quick, quick. I dreamt something about Mona. Why don't you answer me? No, I won't lie down—don't say she is——"

Stella paused, her eyes dilated with horror, as slowly the memory of the past came back. She was struggling out of bed. She would go to the window. She must lift that blind. Who was in the churchyard out there?

"Mona!" she cried, with a frightened catch in her voice.

Nannie put her arms round her charge and laid her gently down on the bed.

"Mona is dead," she said softly.

Stella stared blankly up at the ceiling.

"Dead!" she muttered. "No, she is in the belfry; Roger will bring her down."

Nannie wrung her hands convulsively.

"There, there, why did I tell her? I have sent her off again, poor lamb."

Late into the night Nannie watched by Stella's bed. Would she never sleep again? Oh! that moaning, it was terrible. Then Stella became still and quiet, and Nannie, with a sigh of relief, stole into the adjoining room, leaving the door open. Her head had scarcely touched the pillow when she fell asleep, worn out with watching.

When all was still Stella again opened her eyes and slowly got out of bed. "Mona is in the belfry. It is dark. I must go and let her out," she muttered.

Slipping on a dressing-gown she crept downstairs, pausing in the hall for the keys. They were in the same old spot; then she softly drew back the bolts of the door and stole out. The pebbles on the gravel cut her feet, for she had no shoes on, and the night air blew keenly through her fever-stricken frame, but she hurried on, muttering to herself and striving to collect her wandering thoughts.

How still it was. There! was that Mona calling?

"I am coming, coming," she called feebly as with trembling hands she opened the heavy oaken door.

Would she be in time?

"I am coming, coming," she called again as she began her weary climb.

Up the long dark winding stairs she crept. "Mona!" she cried, "Mona!" but only a long, wailing echo repeated "Mona."

She could hear the flutter of wings in the darkness; strange, weird noises broke the ghostly silence, and she shivered with terror.

"Mona, where are you?" she cried again to the blackness, and her voice sounded strange to her ears.

Her temples were burning, and bright lights began to dance before her tortured eyes. Now her hands were like fire, now damp with an icy chill, as with difficulty she felt her way up to the belfry tower.

The old doors shook with the force of the wind which howled and moaned about it. Stella fumbled with the rusty key, but it would not turn. The noises behind her grew louder; they sounded like the pattering of invisible feet.

"Mona!" she shrieked again, and threw herself against the doorway. It was not locked, and the fastening was worn and almost broken. It gave as her light weight touched it, and she fell headlong into the room.

There was a low, shivering sound among the bells. To Stella's disordered fancy it was full of menace.

There in the darkness she knelt.

"Mona, I have come to save you!" she whispered as she stretched out her hands. In the silence there was a laugh—a wild, harsh metallic laugh—it came from the corner where the tolling bell was hung. "Are you there?" whispered the girl tremulously. "Hush! I will come to you;" and she cautiously began to feel her way towards the sound.

Suddenly it began again, a harsh mocking laugh, above her, behind her, around her.

Where was she? In the belfry alone in the dark—and Mona? Mona was dead; she was a murderess. What was that laughing at her up there in the blackness?

Yes, it was Mona. Mona, dead, and she was laughing, laughing horribly. She could feel her icy breath; she was touching her; she was throwing her down!

Stella gave a wild scream, and threw up her hands as if to protect her face from an unseen enemy; she swayed to and fro for a minute, then fell headlong into the deeper darkness below. There was a wild laugh up among the bells, then silence for a minute. Then, solemnly, mournfully, into the night air floated the muffled toll of the Passing Bell.

MARY WEST.

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ST. PATRICK'S CHOICE.

THERE was a dew upon the hedgerow cobwebs, and in the air a faint hint of early violets. Since daybreak, a garrulous blackbird had been lilting from the old thorn tree above Tobe-Patrick well, and now the Ballycarney mass bell sent its summons across the valleys.

Two persons were coming towards the crossroads in answer to that clangorous call—the one a man, old and of feeble bearing, the other a girl, the prettiest in all the barony.

By the crossroads stile they met and gave each other "good-morrow."

"Yarrah, Maureen," said the ancient, leaning heavily on his staff, "you're the picture of good looks! But where's your shamrock? Sure, you didn't come out without the shamrock on Patrick's Day, did you?"

Maureen blushed under her shawl. "I—I gave it to someone," she stammered.

"Aha," he grunted. "An' this is how the land lies? Sure I was thinkin' Peter O'Hara wouldn't be keeping his daughter long. And who's the lucky boy? I don't know."

"Then you won't know, either, Mehaul," she said with some spirit. "'Tis none of your business at all."

Mehaul chuckled and made haste to guide the affronted beauty over the stile.

"Sure, I wouldn't offend you for all the gold between here an' Dublin town. All I asked you was because 'tis a serious matther to give shamrocks away on Patrick's Day—a mighty serious matther."

"How is that, Mehaul?" asked the girl, interested and somewhat mollified, as they set forth along the road together.

Mehaul Reagan winked furtively as he produced his odorous short clay pipe and filled it with tobacco. He was the recognised chronicler general of Ballycarney affairs, and, as such, it behoved him to discover the identity of Maureen O'Hara's swain.

Mehaul had all the traditions and superstitions of the county Kilmore at the ends of his gnarled fingers, and he now proposed to use his knowledge as a means of worming the desired scrap of information out of his fair companion.

"How about giving the shamrock away, Mehaul?" repeated Maureen eagerly.

The sly Scheannachie lit his dhudeen, fitted on the tin lid with care, and began to smoke contentedly.

"Well, alannah," he said, after a pause, "'tis an old superstition his riverence would be calling it. They say that when a girl gives a boy a shamrock on Patrick's Day she does it to test his true love."

"To test his love, Mehaul?"

"Aye, that's what my grandmother said. 'Twas like this, Maureen. I heard the old grandmother tell no less a fine lady than Dame Carney herself. I was only a slip of a boy when Dame Carney—she was Miss Fitzgerald then—came to consult the wise woman."

"'Tell me, Mrs. Reagan,' says she, 'if Sir Geoffrey Carney loves me.'

"The old grandmother took a bunch of shamrock that myself had plucked (for it was Patrick's Day) an' gave it to Miss Fitzgerald.

"'Miss Honor,' she says, 'if you want to find out the truth, give that shamrock to Sir Geoffrey. Then unbeknown to him, or anyone else, go by the hill path to the well of St. Patrick this very night, when the moon is high. There will be a blackbird sitting on the thorn tree over the well. 'Tis a fairy blackbird, Miss Honor, but it won't hurt you if you repeat St. Patrick's name three times, an' dip your little fingers into the water.

"'Then the blackbird will fly away to fetch the man that loves you best. Wait till the full of the moon, an' when twelve o'clock strikes from Castle Carney clock tower, you will see your true lover's face in the water of St. Patrick's well.'"

"Oh!" exclaimed Maureen, who had not lost a syllable of the reminiscence. "An' did she see him, Mehaul?"

"See him, is it? Sure of course she did. Next day she comes to my old grandmother an' gives her five golden sovereigns."

"'Mrs. Reagan,' she says, 'the spell came true. I saw Sir Geoffrey's face in the well last night, an' this morning I promised to marry him.'

"Marry him she did too, an' mighty happy they were. Now, Maureen, if you go to the well to-night, an' the boy that you gave the shamrock to really loves you, you'll see his face in the water."

Mehaul's dhudeen had gone out, and he stopped to light it. When he turned round, the operation performed, he was surprised to hear what sounded like a sob from Maureen.

"Eyah, Maureen, is it crying you are?" inquired the Scheannachie, peering under the coquettishly draped shawl.

Maureen was crying, not very bitterly, perhaps, but

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still undoubtedly crying. Mehaul Reagan's scheme had succeeded even better than he expected, and it only needed a little diplomacy and sundry words of fatherly comfort to make the girl unburden herself of her griefs.

"I've r-ruined it all!" she wailed. "O Mehaul, I've ruined the spell. Sure, I had two bunches of shamrock, an' I gave both away—to different boys. Now I must wait till next Patrick's Day to find out which loves me best."

But Mehaul came to the rescue.

"An' is that what you're crying for?" he shouted. "'Tis laughin' you ought to be. Sure, the two bunches won't hurt the spell, Maureen, for only one of them can be the fairy bunch. Never you fear, but go to the well at midnight, an' you'll see the face o' the boy that you're goin' to marry. By-the-way, alannah, who were the two boys you mintioned? The names have clean slipped my memory."

In Maureen's delight at hearing that the shamrock spell held good still, she revealed her heart's secret to the wily Scheannachie.

The two favoured "boys" were Bryan Kavanagh and Denny Nowlan—both strapping youths and promising withal.

They had plagued her with their intentions for a twelvemonth until she was utterly at a loss to choose between them.

"An' you've no choice at all?" queried Mehaul.

Maureen pursed her pretty lips.

"N-no—I've no choice. I did think I liked Bryan better, but then Denny came back from New York an'—an'——"

"An' he looked so fine in his broadcloth you couldn't resist him?" said Mehaul.

"No such thing!" cried Maureen. "He knows more in a day than Bryan does in a year. But where's the use o' talkin'? if the spell is as good as you say the well will show me the man to take."

"Aye, that it will," Mehaul answered.

Mehaul went chuckling across the churchyard after parting from Maureen.

The old man had a pretty little scheme in view. He, Mehaul Reagan, would himself be the *deus ex machina* in this interesting love episode.

Accordingly, after mass, the Scheannachie seated himself in a cosy corner of the churchyard where the young men on Sundays and holidays were wont to foregather. To-day being the festival of the patron saint there was a considerable assembly and the conversation was animated.

Mehaul smilingly noticed the twin bunches of shamrocks borne by Bryan Kavanagh and Denny Nowlan.

Young Kavanagh being a farmer's son and country-bred wholly, carried his bunch in the traditional manner—in his hat. His rival, however, had picked up some notions among the Americans, and sported the verdant keepsake as a buttonhole.

The stay-at-home seemed honest, but heavy; the returned American was a happy type of native Irish rumours, grafted on transatlantic experience. Oddly enough, they were old friends and swore by each other.

Which should be picked out for Maureen? Which sent at midnight to peep over the girl's shoulder into the mirror of Patrick's well? Such was the Scheannachie's crafty scheme for making his spell work—such the manner in which he hoped to render Maureen happy for life.

Finally the girl's own words rose to his mind. She had said: "I did think I liked Bryan better, but then Denny came back from New York——"

Moreover, she had added that Denny "knew more in a day than Bryan did in a year," and dwelt upon Denny's promise to take her to rich America. Clearly the girl secretly favoured Denny Nowlan. Therefore it was right that Denny she should have.

"Denny avic," he said, "you're after Maureen O'Hara?"

"You can bet I am," answered Denny.

"Very well, ma bouchal. I'll give you a spell to win her. Hold your ear close."

Then the Sheannachie unfolded to young Nowlan a wonderful phishogue by which he was to look into the waters of St. Patrick's well by midnight and there behold the face of his true love.

Now Denny was sceptical as regarded phishogues, but he shared the local respect for Mehaul and took care not to let that worthy see him laughing in his sleeve at this utterly ridiculous way of winning Maureen.

Thus it came to pass that old Mehaul went home sure of the success of his plan, and determined to be a third party by St. Patrick's well that night, while Denny Nowlan, laughing gaily, told the story of the proposed spell to the churchyard loungers.

"You go in my place, Bryan," said Denny to his rival. "For my part I prefer to court Maureen by her father's turf fire."

Bryan Kavanagh was the only one present who did not join in the laughter. He was thinking over the Sheannachie's spell.

Old Mehaul crouched in the copse behind the wall that Patrick's night as pretty Maureen came falteringly up the path. He heard her repeat the name of St. Patrick thrice, kneeling to dip her fingers in the water, and noticed with a grin that the "fairy" blackbird frightened from his nest, flapped through the branches even as he had promised.

Then he saw Maureen fix her eyes steadily upon the moonlit surface of the well.

"Clang!"

Out chimed the clock from Castle Carney, ringing clearly through the stillness of midnight, waking the watchdogs with its brazen voice. At the twelfth stroke there was a rustling in the bracken and some one stole past Mehaul's hiding place.

Next moment the old man uttered an exclamation of astonishment, for the tall figure that leant over the well in the moonlight did not belong to Denny Nowlan but to—Bryan Kavanagh!

There was a startled cry, and Maureen turned from the pale reflection of Bryan's face in the water to find herself clasped in the strong arms of a real, palpable Bryan.

"Ah, then, Bryan darling," so Mehaul heard her say, "'tis myself is glad you've come. Sure I was afraid it would be Denny Nowlan."

As the astonished Sheannachie crept out of his lair, and down the hillside, all he could say to himself was: "St. Patrick is a better match-maker than me, after all."

GERALD BRENAN.

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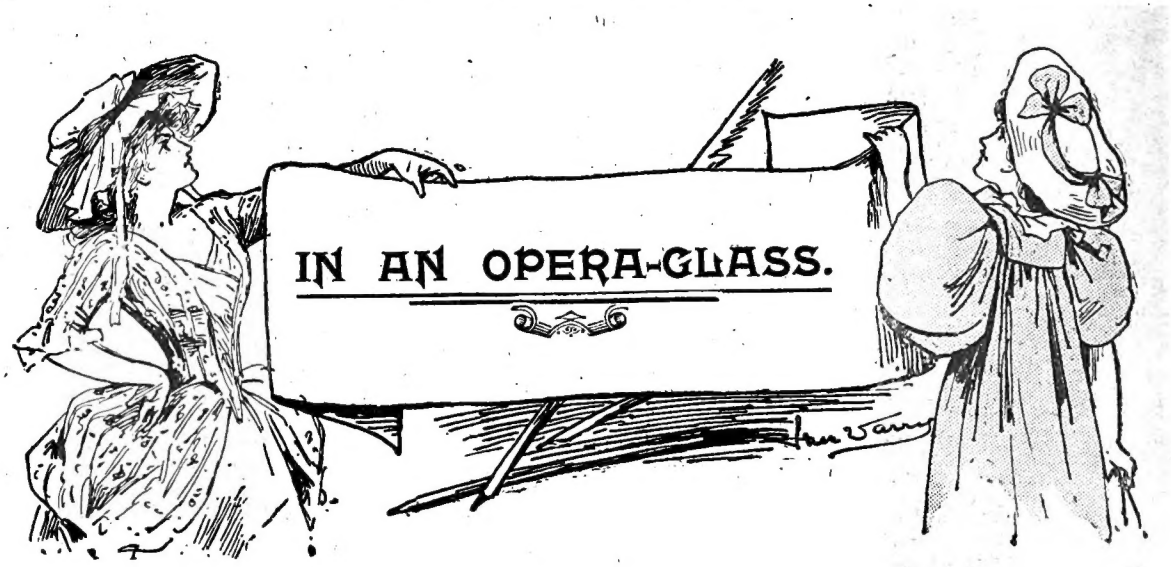

IN AN OPERA-GLASS.

"Would you like to use the glass, sir?" asked the whimsical looking man who sat in the row of orchestra stalls in front of me at *The Lady of Lyons*.

I had been watching him closely, on account of his odd physiognomy. He had a big face, carefully shaven except behind the jaws, and a throat-beard leaving his chin clear. His mouth looked as if it had been pressed flat by a determined hand, and had never since been able to reassert itself. His eyes, big, too, were heavily indignant in expression, suggesting that he had never quite got over the affront which Nature had put upon him by fixing his lips permanently in that shape.

I took his lorgnette with thanks, and gazed through it at the Pauline of the evening; but as I leant over to hand it back, "Wait a moment," he said, looking full at me in a singular way; "you haven't seen the best of it. Hold it up, small end down, at half arm's length, and see what the effect will be."

Doing as he suggested, I met with no unusual result. He saw from my face that I was puzzled; and bending near, so as not to attract attention from those around us, he asked:

"Don't you see a woman's face looking up out of the lens?"

"No," said I, rather curtly, thinking that he joked too familiarly for the brevity of our acquaintance, and that he had perhaps been drinking too much.

I mutely insisted on his taking the opera-glass again, and drew back into my own chair, leaving him rather disconcerted. He soon got over this, and continued to follow the acting, though without lively interest, and with an air of reverie. I noticed also that he did not use his glass on the stage, nor on the audience, either; but he several times lifted it in the way he had pointed out to me, and, after adjusting it to suit himself, contemplated the large end with rapt absorption.

I began to consider. I had noticed on the convex glass surface broken reflections from different parts of the theatre, the central cluster of lights, or dim fragments of the gold ornamentation of the gallery, and a Liliputian host of spectators, among whom were some of the ladies in charming costumes behind us or at the side. These had flitted over it as I changed the angle, but the images were so minute that I hadn't thought of them in connection with the lorgnette owner's eccentric inquiry. It now struck me that he might have more imagination or better eyes than mine.

So, at the end of the play, while he was putting on his overcoat, I touched him on the shoulder, and told him I had a word to say when we could get into the lobby. Having reached it, I asked him if he could direct me, a stranger in the city, to a good place near by where I could get supper before going back to my hotel. He told me of one, and I instantly asked him to come with me.

"I'm curious to know something more," I added, "about that opera-glass of yours. I'm afraid I didn't understand it."

He appeared pleased, and after a moment accepted my proposal to sup together.

"Speaking in confidence," said he, as we went along the street, "I'm not sure my wife will like it my staying out any later. She's already jealous of me going to the theatre when I go alone. Though she doesn't say so, yet she fancies there's some woman in the case, you understand." Then after a pause: "If she only knew! There is a woman in the——" here he shook the leather receptacle in which he was carrying the glass—"literally, a woman in the case. Ha, ha!"

The revival of this fantasy and his odd frankness quickened my curiosity. At our restaurant there were, fortunately, little boxes partitioned off at one side, with curtains in front, and, taking refuge in one of these, I ordered a supper of roast oysters and a beverage which we were weak enough to call punch, and which was strong enough to bear the opprobrium of that name.

"Now for enlightenment," said I, when the glasses were refilled.

My companion had taken off his hat in deference to the oysters. His flat-pressed mouth, his indignant eyes, his crimson forehead, and grey hair jutting up oddly behind his head, all contrasted strangely with the singular tale he proceeded to relate.

"You see," he began, "I'm a plain man, without any show of romance. I'm level-headed in my affairs, and

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well-known in business circles. I don't go in for amusements or pleasures, and you couldn't engage me to read a novel. But there's one thing in my experience that would astonish my business acquaintances, if they knew it. I tell you because you're a stranger, and I've taken a fancy to you, and I think it may do you good, as a young man, to learn how to look below the surface."

Here the narrator gave a sly chuckle, glancing towards the lorgnette—which stood on the table—in a way that suggested a double meaning.

"I married late," he went on, "and some years ago, before my wedding, I was at the theatre one night, when a lady of decided beauty and fashion attracted my notice. She did more than that—she made me feel what I hadn't felt since I was a boy. When I went home to my bachelor quarters that night I had to admit that I was in love. I wasn't a society man, so my chances for seeing her again were few; but I found out after a time who she was, and met her once or twice in the streets. There came a very memorable evening when I met her in the theatre again. They were playing *The Lady of Lyons*. Between the acts, as I sat thinking of nothing, I was startled by an exclamation like a faint scream in the balcony just above my chair, for I was at the back of the orchestra stalls.

"I looked up at once, and saw this opera-glass falling through the air directly towards my head. It was so near that I didn't dare to move my head, for fear that if I took my eyes from the falling object I might dodge just where it would strike me all the more dangerously. I just put my gloved hands up, kept perfectly cool, and caught the glass as neatly as you please. There was a murmur of approbation from the people around me, and some impertinent applause, but the main thing was that, while I still sat looking up to see who had let the glass fall, my beautiful young lady's faced peered over the cushioned edge of the balcony, and her eyes looked down into mine. The opera-glass was hers! So instead of breaking my head, it simply broke my heart.

"The lady drew back at once, and another person peered over—a highly finished young man with coral studs and a white necktie—a sop, sir." (The old gentleman at once showed great anger and intolerance.) "Why wasn't I made, I wonder, with a face shaped like an almond, and not much colour in it; and why wasn't I taught to wear a moustache with a curl on the top end of it like the loose end of a banjo string? As I hadn't these charms, and the young man in the balcony had, I knew of course that there was no chance for me. But one thing I immediately resolved upon. When I started to go out of the door after the play, I naturally found the young jackanapes waiting for me. But instead of the opera-glass I handed him my card, saying: 'You'll learn my standing from that, sir; but I can't consent to part with this article. I will replace it with a new one. When a man has saved himself from hurt, as I have, without troubling anyone, he ought to have a reward, and I claim this as mine.' I put in that touch of humour, but the young man didn't take it humourously at all. He threatened to call a policeman and arrest me if I didn't give up the trifle.

"'Do,' said I, 'and have a ridiculous item in the papers to-morrow, with Miss N.'s name mentioned.' Some of the dispersing audience began to notice us, and my hint quieted him. He merely said: 'This is unjustifiable. You will hear further from me,' and went off. When you think of it, it was extraordinary; but I stuck to my point, and have always kept the souvenir, though there was some talk of a suit, and even of a duel with the young fellow Hefflebower."

"Hefflebower!" I exclaimed.

"Pshaw! yes. I oughtn't to have told you the name. But never mind. Gad, my blood was up. That was my time for romance, then or never, and I didn't even wink at the thought of fighting."

"But what became of the young lady?"

The whimsical gentleman suddenly got up from the table (having eaten his oysters and emptied his second glass of punch).

"I must go home," he said gloomily. "Miss N., of course, married Hefflebower."

"But I thought you spoke of being married, too?" I reminded him.

"Look once more in the glass, the way I told you," he proposed, ignoring my remark.

I took it up impulsively, and did so. Was my new acquaintance a magician, or was I deceived by some subtle influence in the punch, or overexcited by this story? Certainly on peering into the opera-glass I discerned somewhere between the large and the small end what looked like the interior of the place of entertainment we had left, and among the reflected faces that of a beautiful young woman especially prominent. Behind her, at one side, I was sure I could make out my friend Hefflebower.

"You see, I have it all there," exclaimed the owner of the glass, with triumph. "No one can take away these memories or associations, and they have the unusual advantage of being visible."

I glanced a second time in the lenses, but the figures I had seen were now gone. Before I could demand an explanation, my singular companion had said good-night, and disappeared, taking his visionary tubes with him.

I made no further attempt to clear up this mystery, and will make none now. But I spent some time in the restaurant box, ruminating on the queer abiding places of the romantic. The old man's case seemed to show how the poetic part of some lives stands in about the same relation to the prosaic as if seen through the wrong end of the opera-glass.

I afterwards learnt that this eccentric gentleman was Sheale, the bank director, who, after his disappointment, married his housekeeper, and was never seen at the theatre except when *The Lady of Lyons* was playing.

ESTHER NOANES.

If you are sufficiently broad-minded to take the advice of those who know, you will at once commence Mr. George Manville Fenn's story, "High Play," the second instalment of which appears on the next page, even if you don't usually read serials.

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HIGH PLAY.

A COMEDY OFF THE STAGE.

By George Manville Fenn.

SUMMARY.

The story opens with an interview between Lady Braetoun and her son Roderick, in which she endeavours to induce him to give up fast living and marry Olive, Isaac Emsworth's heiress. After the interview he goes to see his racehorse in the country with Lucy Lee, a chorus girl, familiarly known as "Baby," who rides the horse round the field.

CHAPTER III.

The Shadow Begins.

Braetoun stood as if turned to stone, while the mare skimmed over the grass like a swallow. He felt paralysed, expecting every moment to see the frail little figure thrown.

But after the first few wild leaps Lucy recovered her balance and sat nearly upright, her yielding figure giving rhythmically to the graceful movements, while the mare answered quickly to the light hand upon the rein.

As they swept round the great field, and began to turn, the girl's face was flushed with excitement.

"Stop, stop!" shouted Braetoun, as the mare swept round behind him, cutting off the top angles.

"No, no!" she cried. "The boy's gone; his father's at church—no one to see. Look, look, Rod!" she cried loudly; and, to his horror, as the mare bounded on, to go down the field once more, the girl threw herself back a little, and, quick as lightning, passed her right leg over from where it rested against the mare's shoulder, and rose again, seated *califourchon*, as the French term it, riding like an Eastern woman, and urging the mare on to her best speed.

Urging the mare on to her best speed.

"She is mad," muttered Braetoun, and the moisture gathered upon his temples and in the palms of his hands. "She must come off now."

Setting his teeth, he watched her gliding along and fully prepared for the catastrophe as the corner was turned at the bottom; but though the mare skimmed round there and at the next, leaning over like a horse in a circus, with the light lace and tulle of the girl's costume fluttering behind, nothing happened. This time she began to check the mare, and as they neared the top, easing more and more, and pulling up just beyond her companion, to wait smiling till he walked up looking black as night.

"There," she cried with a merry laugh, and her eyes sparkling with excitement. "You said I had no grip. That's how I used often to ride when I was a girl."

"You little fool!" he cried angrily. "I saw you the first time in burlesque; I nearly saw you the last time in tragedy. Are you mad?"

"Oh, Rod, you don't know what it is to feel the wind whistling by you again like that. I felt as if I was only twelve once more. But Rod, darling, you must win everything with her; she goes like the wind. She is a grand horse."

"How could you!" he panted, with his hand upon his breast; "you've given me a horrible palpitation."

"What! Did I frighten my darling boy? What nonsense! It was delightful; it made me feel so young and happy again. It was just like being at the old farm before I came up to Aunt Duncan and the theatre."

"Pity you ever came it seems to me."

"Oh, Rod, dear, don't, please, please, look so cross. It was only a bit of fun."

"So wild, so dangerous," he said, looking white, and as if his nerves had had a nasty jar. "I stood watching, expecting to see you fall with your foot in the stirrup, and be dragged to death."

"Oh, how horrid! To go thinking such things! I wasn't a bit afraid. I don't think I could be afraid of anything."

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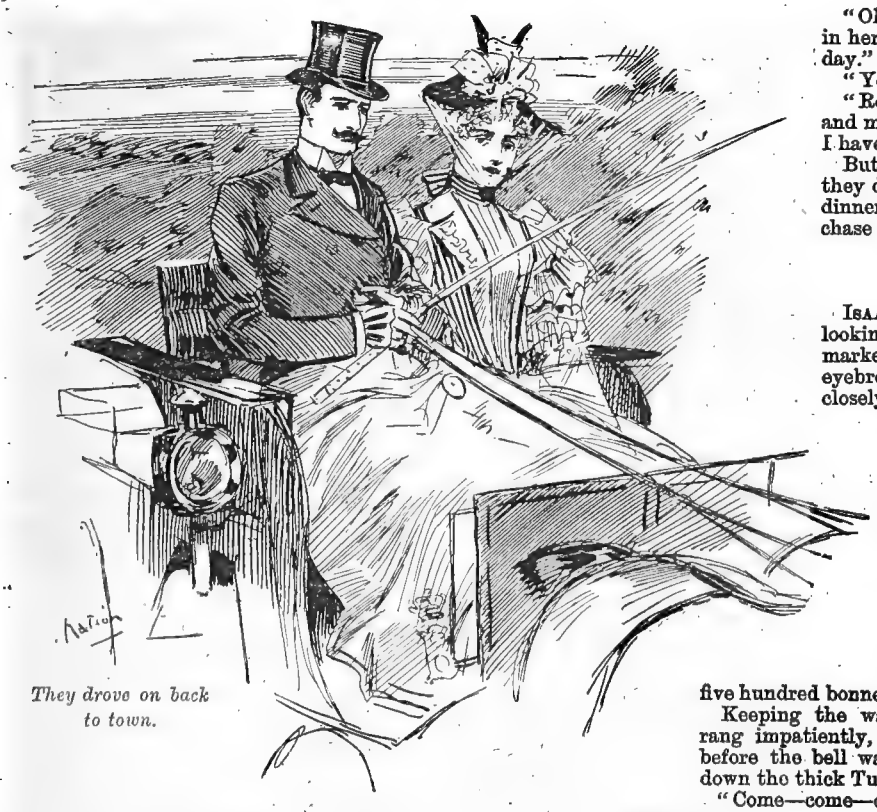

They drove on back to town.

"I know that," he said.

"Yes I am. There's one thing frightens me."

"Eh, what's that?"

"I often wake in the night and lie and think of it, and it makes me shiver, Rod."

"Bogey under the bed?" he cried mockingly.

"The bogey of my life, Rod."

"What is it—want more money?"

"It frightens me so that I lie there and cry."

"Poor little Baby! What is it, then?"

"What I talked about before I rode."

"Nonsense!" he said hastily. "Here! Hi! Vinnis, come and take the mare. Now then, jump," he continued, as he thrust his arm through the rein, and placed a hand on either side of the little waist.

She glanced towards the farm buildings, put her hands on his shoulders, and let them glide onward, as she leapt into his arms, clasping his neck and kissing him quickly twice before he shook her off.

"Don't be a fool, Baby. Do you want that boy to see? Here, come and take the mare. When is your father coming back?"

"'Spect him every moment, m' lord."

"You lying young scoundrel, you don't expect him for hours! Tell him from me that if ever I come down again at such an important time and find he has left the mare with no one to look after her but you, I shall get another trainer."

"Yes, m'lord," said the lad, as he walked away with the mare, and then to himself: "Likely. Who'd manage her but him or me? Kick 'em to the middle o' next week. He won't do that."

"Isn't one boy enough to look after her, Rod?" said the girl some time after, as Braetoun mounted beside her in the phæton, and he began to drive back.

"No. Half-a-dozen are not amongst such a set of rogues and thieves. Some one'll be getting at her and spoiling her for the next race. Bah! I get sick of it all."

"Oh, Rod, dear," she said with tears in her eyes; "don't spoil our delightful day."

"You make me," he said bitterly.

"Rod! When I am loving you more and more every time! I am so sorry if I haven't done what you like."

But the shadow gathered blacker as they drove on back to town, and the dinner and champagne did nothing to chase it away.

CHAPTER IV.

Papa's Blunder.

Isaac Emsworth, a thick-set, keen-looking man of fifty, with strongly marked features, and over-hanging eyebrows of the same grizzly hue as his closely-cut hair and beard, sat in his library at Eaton Place, reading a letter.

"Confound 'em!" he said; "no sooner is the cat away than the cursed mice begin to play. I shall have to go. Such a nuisance, too, just now."

He banged the letter down on the table, and took out an old silver hunting watch by a piece of much frayed string.

"Quarter past ten, and not down yet. I could have put on five hundred bonnets and shawls."

Keeping the watch in his hand, he rose and rang impatiently, occupying the time that elapsed before the bell was answered by walking up and down the thick Turkey carpet.

"Come—come—come!" he muttered; "what a while you are. Oh, there you are, Johnson."

This to a very important-looking butler, who glanced rather contemptuously at the old silver watch lying open in his master's hand with the frayed string hanging down and ending in a roughly-tied knot.

"Is the carriage at the door?"

"Been there a quarter of an hour, sir."

"That's right! Send up to Miss Emsworth's room and say it is waiting."

"Yes, sir."

The important butler marched out—it was not a walk—and Isaac Emsworth, late of Laurentstroom, South Africa, stood opening and shutting the old well-worn silver watch with a series of sharp snaps.

"Yes, d——n 'em. I shall have to go and she won't like it. More do I! These things always happen at the wrong time. I shall have to ask Lady Braetoun to——Oh, Olive, my dear, what a time you have been! I could have—Humph! Ha! Yes! Well, you do look very nice."

He began frowningly and impatient of speech as the door opened, closed, and light seemed to have come into the gloomy room to brighten it in the shape of a charmingly dressed girl of twenty, whose dark brown hair, creamy complexion, and large, soft eyes, suggested the appropriate choice of her name. Then his voice grew softer, the hard, business look gave way to a smile, and father gazed proudly at daughter as he ended with the above homely words.

"You like my dress?"

"Hang the dress, my dear! I was thinking of you. H'm, yes, like the dress, too! But, I say, my dear, time's money, you know. You have been a deuce of a while!"

"Oh, papa, what nonsense! Why, Melson half scolded me for hurrying so."

"Oh, she did, did she? Strikes me, my dear, that I shall have to put my foot down with some of these fine gentlemen and ladies here. But there, let's be off."

He began throwing his letters into an open case, after

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thrusting his watch back in his pocket, leaving the string hanging outside. Then, as he banged down the lid and locked it, his daughter came close up.

"Eh, my dear, what is it?" he said, for she began smilingly to tuck the frayed string after the watch into his waistcoat pocket.

"You ought to have a gold watch and a handsome chain, papa, dear," she said, as she reached up and kissed him.

"I? What for? I wouldn't change that old watch for

"Don't be afraid, pet; I shan't get tired."

the best in London. Good old friend, my dear. Ha! that's nice; give us another," he continued, with his hard look softening more and more. "Don't be afraid, pet; I shan't get tired. You don't know how hungry I was for a few all those years when I was out there."

"And so was I, dear," said the girl, clinging to the muscular arm, and repeating the salute. "Madame Duvaille was so good and kind, but I often used to feel as if I must run away from St. Cloud to come over to you."

"H'm, yes, I wish you had, my darling. No, I don't. It wouldn't have done. H'm, what nice soft cheeks! But you look very pale. I mustn't have you ill."

"Now you are fidgeting again, papa, dear," said the girl earnestly; "and I really am quite well. Only a little tired, perhaps, with being out too much. Let's go somewhere into the country for a month, so as to be quiet and together more."

"H'm, yes, it would be nice, my dear, but—no, no, can't at present; I'm too busy, and you've too many engagements."

"Yes, papa," said the girl rather sadly.

"But I mustn't have you ill. Can't have you going away and leaving me as your poor mother did."

"Oh, papa!"

"My darling!" he said softly, with his eyes moistening. "But none of that nonsense. No use for me to make a big fortune for you, and you not spend it. But there; come along."

"Where are we going, dear?"

"Eh? Going? Oh, you'll soon see. Just to make a call on somebody."

"So early? And how mysterious you are, dear," said the girl merrily.

"Am I? Well, the mystery will soon be at an end. Now then."

He opened the door, and followed the graceful girl into the hall, holding up his head proudly, and putting on a stiff, important mien, as the footman waiting hurried down to a handsome barouche and magnificent pair of horses, and the butler handed hat, gloves, and cane.

"Seven hundred and nine, Wimpole Street."

The footman touched his hat, mounted to his seat beside the coachman, the horses started at a rapid pace, and Isaac Emsworth threw himself back and sat proudly watching with his eyes half closed, the bright eager interest his child took in the busy streets, the gay-looking park they crossed, and, above all, he felt his breast swell as he duly noted the looks of admiration that were darted at the unconscious girl.

Very little was said till Wimpole Street was reached, and then Olive said quickly:

"What a great, gloomy, dull place, papa! Please do tell me whom we are going to see."

"You'll know in a few minutes, pet. There, don't look like that."

The carriage was drawn up at a wide door bearing two brass plates, the footman knocked and rang loudly, his person preventing his young mistress from reading on the upper plate, "George Murray, M.D.," and on the lower, and much newer, "Allan Murray, M.D."

The door was thrown open. The footman returned after a brief colloquy with a grave-looking man in plain clothes, the steps were rattled down, and directly after the visitors were ushered into a large gloomy-looking room, the man taking away the card handed to him from a much-worn pocket-book.

"Why, papa!" cried the girl flushing, and then turning pale, as she caught excitedly at her father's hand. "You've brought me to a doctor's."

"Well, well, well, pet," he said, smiling, as he held and patted the delicately-gloved little hand. "Suppose I have? You're not going to be frightened by a dose of physic."

"No, no, papa, dear," she whispered in agitated tones; "but—but, indeed, I'm not ill."

"Of course not. Not ill. You see, darling, I didn't want to alarm you, but you have scared me. Your poor dear mother was so delicate, and you have changed so lately that, eh?—ha—ha—ha!—don't you see, your poor old dad wanted you to consult the best physician in London so as to make him happy, eh?"

"Yes, yes, you dear, kind old dada," said the girl in an excited whisper, as he ended his blundering speech and forced laugh, which sounded very dreary; "but, but—but——"

"Now, now, now, my own darling, but you must not be foolish and hysterical. Come, be brave. Why, pet, Olive, he won't want to cut off a leg; it only means pills every

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night and morning—well shaken before taken, and that sort of thing."

"But, papa, darling, you don't understand. *You* oughtn't to have brought me. I ought to have come with a lady friend, and——"

"Eh? Oh, I didn't think of that, my dear," said Emsworth, looking aghast, "I thought——"

"Doctor Allan Murray will see you now, sir," said the servant at the door.

CHAPTER V.

Papa's Blunder, which the Doctor Caps.

Olive rose from her seat, calm and dignified of mien, ready to face the difficulty.

"I sail in the 'Greyberg Castle' on Friday."

"Come, papa," she said.

"But—er—if you think that we ought, my dear?" whispered her father.

"It is too late now, dear," she whispered back, and she walked firmly to the door, followed by her father, who looked the more agitated of the pair, as they were shown into the doctor's consulting-room, where Olive changed colour on facing; instead of some grey, benevolent-looking old gentleman, a grave, dark man of some three or four-and-thirty, who rose and motioned them to seats, slightly raising his eyebrows at the rather unusual character of the visit.

Slight as was the movement, Olive Emsworth, in her then highly-strung, excited condition, saw and resented it; but, making an effort over herself, she was the next moment perfectly calm.

"I find I have done wrong, Doctor Murray," said Emsworth hurriedly. "I ought to have understood the etiquette of such matters better, and left my daughter to come with a lady friend; but I am a rough man. I could only think of checking whatever was wrong in my daughter's health, and hearing your opinion. There, sir, I beg your pardon, I beg my dear child's, here, for my mistake—I—I meant it for the best."

His voice sounded a little husky as he ended, and Olive's hand stole into his, while her beautiful eyes beamed upon him with a look of love.

As she turned now to meet the doctor firmly, the blood rose again to her temples in a warm flush, for she found that he was gazing at her intently, but with a quiet tact he turned at once to his other visitor, to say, in a grave, calm way:

"Perhaps it would have been better, Mr. Emsworth, and, of course, it is the custom for a lady to accompany a patient on such a visit; but I quite understand your position, and I feel sure that Miss Emsworth fully grasps a father's anxiety, and, under the circumstances, will excuse any little questions I may ask her—if," he said with a quiet smile, as he turned to her again, "I think it necessary to ask any."

Olive bowed coldly, but she felt as she now met his gaze, that he was looking at her differently. She could not have analysed and described the two glances, but she knew that now it was the physician addressing her, and the sensation of resentment from which she suffered grew less painful.

"By-the-way, Mr. Emsworth," continued the doctor smiling pleasantly, "I ought not to sail under false colours. You must have been thinking of my father when you spoke of the first physician in London. He has to all intents and purposes retired from his practice, and only sees a few

of his oldest patients. I would, however, if this were a serious case, ask him to see Miss Emsworth."

"Then you don't think it is, sir?" said Emsworth excitedly.

"My dear sir, no. The matter is so simple that I can see at a glance what is wrong. Moreover, I can guarantee that in a very short time your daughter will be in perfect health."

"Then you don't think—her mother—that terrible——" faltered Emsworth.

"My dear sir, no. Look at your child's face. Nothing of the kind, I assure you. Pray tell me if I am wrong, Miss Emsworth," he said quietly. "You have been into society a great deal lately?"

She coloured at the directness of the question and bowed her head.

"You have been to a good many concerts, balls, and theatres?"

"Oh, yes!" she said naïvely, "a great many."

"And, I suppose, to many of those health-destroying crushes which fashionable ladies give and call 'At Homes?'"

"Oh, yes, for the last three months," said Olive, smiling.

"My dear young lady, do you keep pets? Have you a bird—linnet or canary?"

"I have a goldfinch," she said, feeling now half annoyed.

"Exactly. Then let me tell you this: If you had hung that bird's cage in one of the suffocating drawing-rooms that you have visited, the mephitic air it had to breathe would have poisoned it—the bird would have died."

"Ah, yes," said Emsworth quickly, "of course."

"Exactly. There, my dear sir, can you wonder that your daughter looks a little worn and pale?"

"But do you think that is all, doctor?"

"I am sure it is all, sir, and I hope Miss Emsworth will not be angry with me and feel vexed at having for a time to change her way of life."

"Indeed, no," she said eagerly, as the last trace of resentment died away.

"Then," he said, smiling, "I shall prescribe with the greatest rigour. Give up society for a time, and then enjoy 'At Home's' sparingly. Mr. Emsworth, take your daughter for three months into the country—the seaside for preference. A sea voyage would be better; but that is, perhaps, proposing what might be a difficulty."

"Eh? No, I think not," said Emsworth, starting. "If you would not mind, my dear?"

"Mind what, papa?"

"Going with me."

"Going with you?" she said, changing colour a little.

"Well—er—you see, my dear—letters—only this morning—I haven't had time to break the news to you; I was so anxious, too, about coming here. The fact is, I am obliged to go out to the Cape in the next boat."

"Oh, papa!" she cried, laying her hand upon his arm.

"You—you wouldn't like to go with me, of course?"

"Yes, yes. Don't go and leave me behind."

The curiously intent look came into Doctor Murray's eyes again, as he watched the beautiful face before him, and saw the quiver about the lips and the agitation which ruffled the brow.

"I don't want to, my darling," said Emsworth dolefully; "but what does Doctor Murray say to that—would it do?"

"My dear sir, nothing could be better. Miss Emsworth would find it, I presume, a delightful trip."

"Then, by George! Olive, my darling, we'll go together. I shan't mind it then a bit."

The girl's face lit up with content again, and she turned to look gratefully at the doctor, but felt almost startled at his earnest gaze, which once more passed away.

"May I ask you what vessel you would go by?" he said.

"The *Greyberg Castle* is the next."

"And you will go by it?"

"Certainly, if I can get berths; if not, by the next."

"This is a curious little world, Miss Emsworth," said the doctor, smiling, as he turned to her; and once more she felt quite at ease.

"I do not understand you."

"I mean that it is singular how we are all linked together in some form or another. I shall surprise you, I am sure, when I tell you that I sail in the *Greyberg Castle* on Friday."

"You do?" cried Emsworth boisterously. "Capital! Then you will be on the spot in the event of my daughter requiring medical aid?"

"My dear sir," said the doctor, "throw that idea entirely away. Miss Emsworth requires no medical aid—nothing but that which nature will give her. Lord Bourne——"

"The ex-Prime Minister?"

"Yes. He is an old patient of my father's, and he is rather exhausted by the late Session of Parliament. My father has prescribed a sea voyage and rest, and is coming back to take charge of the practice so as to set me free to go with Lord Bourne upon this trip—very much against my inclination, Miss Emsworth," he continued; "but good Prime Ministers are scarce, and we may want his Lordship again."

"I am delighted, doctor," said Emsworth warmly, "and if money can do it we shall go by the *Greyberg Castle*, sir. We will go. I'll buy somebody out if all the berths are taken."

"I shall be glad to meet my patient again," said the doctor quietly, turning to Olive, "though I have only quelled a false alarm."

"You've set me at rest, doctor," said Emsworth heartily; "but you'll write her a prescription or two, eh?"

"Write down 'Take all the fresh air you can,' Miss Emsworth; 'live well, and have a good quantum of sleep.' Surely that is not necessary?"

"But is that all, doctor?"

"Everything, my dear sir. I could do no more."

He looked as if the interview were at an end, and Olive rose, to hold out her hand and say naïvely:

"Thank you, Doctor Murray, for setting my father's mind at rest; thank you very much."

"I wish I could set every troubled parent's mind at rest as easily, Miss Emsworth."

He walked with them to the door, after touching a bell, while somehow Olive felt as if she would rather he had not taken the fee her father pressed into his hand.

But she did not see that it remained there after she had gone, and that as the door closed, the doctor stood gazing dreamingly after them, with the former intent look in his eyes, till there was a step on the floor-cloth outside, when he started with an angry gesture.

"What folly!" he said quickly, and resuming his chair, he thrust a rustling note into a drawer, and sat there ready and prepared for the next patient who was ushered in.

A dozen more came and went, before the grave-looking manservant brought in a card.

"No, no, Rouch," he said petulantly; "it is not fair. Let the patients come in their turn."

"Yes, sir; but his lordship said——"

The doctor glanced at the card.

"Oh, well, show him in," he said; and Lord Bractoun, looking very haggard, entered the room and threw himself in the patient's chair, to sit gazing in his medical adviser's face.

"Well," said the doctor coldly, "what do you want Roderick?"

"What do I want? Look at me. I'm d——d bad this time."

"Yes, you do look bad, but why do you come?"

"Why did I come? I like that! I tell you I never was so bad before. I can't sleep; I can't eat; I can only take champagne, or brandy, or both."

"So I see. Your hand's like an aspen leaf. Who's the next heir to the title?—a distant cousin, I think."

"Hang it all, Allan, don't talk to a fellow like that! I'm half dead as it is; do you want to kill me right off?"

"If I did I needn't take the trouble. You're killing yourself. I've told you a dozen times, only you don't believe me."

"But I do believe you, old man. Oh, hang it, do set me up again; I will follow out your advice."

"Not you, never; but you've pretty well done it this time. Your nerves are regularly shattered."

"I've had an awful bit of luck."

"Turf?"

"Yes. Something that was a dead certainty."

"There is only one dead certainty," said the doctor coldly.

"Oh, I say, don't, don't! I want help, not for you to jump on me. I was as sure as sure this time; and it would have pulled me round a bit; but a set of cursed scoundrels worked the favourite that way, and I lost."

"Serve you right."

"Well, do you think I don't know that?"

"So as soon as you found you had been swindled, you went to the glass?"

"Yes," groaned Braetoun; "regularly ran *amok*."

"Well, I can't help you, and I have important patients waiting."

"Oh, don't talk like that, old man. I tell you I'm so run down that I could sit and cry like a child."

"An idiot, you mean."

"Don't, don't be a brute to me, Allan. For old Eton and college day's sake, stick to me and wind me up again. Start me once more, and I'll turn over a new leaf."

The young man reached over and caught the doctor's hand, clinging to it with tears in his eyes; and Murray looked down at him with pitying contempt.

"It's waste of time to do anything for you, Roddy, lad," he said. "You'll promise anything, but you've no moral power left to carry it out. You're no longer your own master. There's only one thing that would bring you round."

"Yes: what is it? I'm ready to do anything now."

"Very well; I'll try you. Go upstairs to my bedroom and lie down till all my patients are seen, and then I'll take you."

"Take me—where?" cried Braetoun wildly.

"To an asylum. There is no other chance for you!"

"Yes there is," cried the young man fiercely. "I have a revolver in my drawer at home. Six shots. I've got the pluck to fire till one of them does the business."

"Go and read what Hamlet says about that, and don't talk nonsense."

"I shall have to do it, but I don't want to, for the mater's sake. The old woman has picked out a wife for me."

"A what?" cried Murray contemptuously. "You with a wife! Why you'd do a kinder act in killing a woman than in marrying her. It would be an outrage."

"Yes, I know. It would be now, but I'm going to reform—I want to, now. I do, upon my soul."

"Poor oath. I don't believe you've got one, or a heart either. You are a complete wreck: morally and physically gone."

"Yes, yes, I know, old man; and it's horrid to think of being completely gone at two or three-and-thirty."

"Oh, I don't know. You have outlived all pleasure in life."

"Quite," said the poor wretch sadly; "but look here; you could pull me up again, and—and a wife would save me in the other way."

"One with a large fortune, I suppose?" said Murray scornfully.

"Well, a man must have money."

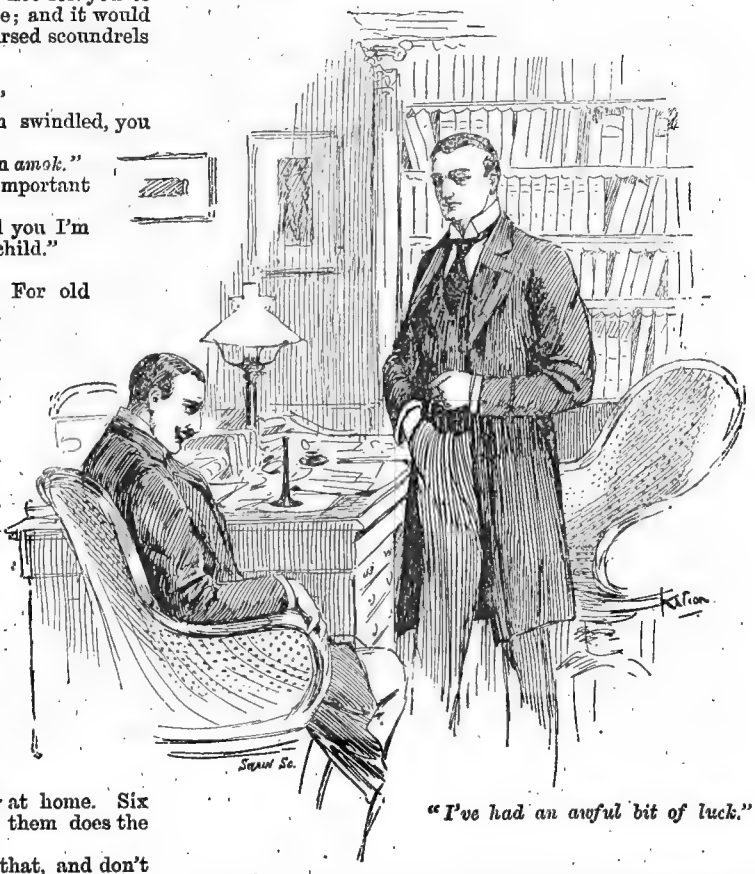
"To fool away. Braetoun, it would be a crime for you to marry an innocent woman, and I'm not going to be your accomplice by giving you the chance."

"Oh, you doctors are brutes—brutes—brutes!" groaned the wretched man. "I've told you I'll turn over a new leaf."

"I've proved the value of your promises a dozen times."

"Give me another chance, Al, old fellow, for the mater's sake."

"Go to some other doctor."



"I've had an awful bit of luck."

"No, no. There isn't a man in London who understands me but you. They'd kill me before they could get into the right treatment."

"Nonsense! Go and try."

"I won't," cried the wretched man fiercely; "but I swear that if you don't take me in hand again I'll use the revolver."

"You haven't even the courage to do that."

"Haven't I? You'll see; and when I've done it they won't stick a stake through me and burn me at the cross roads, will they?"

"No; they'll call it, correctly, temporary insanity: for you are mad."

"Almost raving. Well, when I'm gone I'd rather be the dead man than be you with a kind of murder on your conscience. Am I to go and do——"

"Look here, Rod, I'll give you your last chance. If you don't do as I tell you and follow out my instructions, as well as lead a new life, I swear I will wash my hands of you for ever."

"I'll do anything—anything, old man."

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"Very well; I'll give you something to take now, and as soon as you are a little better, break the news to your mother, and then pack up."

"Break the news—pack up—what do you mean?"

"I mean that I am going on a voyage to South Africa."

"You are?"

"Yes, and I will take you with me. It may mean your salvation."

"But—but I can't leave London. There is my horse—and the mare, and—and—I don't see how I can get away."

"From the intended?" said Murray, with a look of contempt.

"Yes, I meant that," said Braetoun slowly; "but—but—yes, I will. I want to get on the right track again. I will go."

Murray took a sheet of paper from a stationery case, wrote out a prescription, and handed it to his visitor.

"Call at Bell's to get that made up, and take a dose before you leave the shop. Come and see me at twelve to-morrow."

"God bless you, old fellow!" cried Braetoun piously.

"Better leave His name out of our dealings, my lad. There, be off, off now. I'm busy."

"Won't you shake hands?"

"What is the use? I like to grip the hand of a man I respect."

"And we were such friends from boyhood," said Braetoun bitterly. "Never mind, I can wait, Allan, old chap. I really am going to turn over a new leaf now."

"Let's see, then," said the doctor quietly.

The next moment he was alone, gazing in a peculiar dreamy way at the chair where Olive Emsworth had been seated, seeing her there once again, recalling every look and gesture, the quick animated play of her countenance, and the soft pathetic tones of her voice.

A tap at the door made him start back into everyday life, feeling irritable and annoyed with himself, though he could not have explained why.

"Shall I show in the next patient, sir?"

"Yes, of course; I am waiting," he said quickly.

The dreamy picture was gone, and his last patient came into the mental field.

"Going to take a wife with money. Going to turn over a new leaf, eh, Roderick?" he said softly. "I wonder what will be seen on the next page?"

(To be continued.)

RESULT OF JUMBLED STORY COMPETITION

No. 2.

THE KEY APPEARS ON PAGE 145.

REMARKABLE ingenuity has been displayed by most readers in this competition, with the result that several of them are very nearly correct. Mr. John McA. Boyd, of 32, Stevenson Drive, Langside, Glasgow, has been awarded £2; Mr. R. W. Witham, 11, Great Coram Street, W.C., £1; Mr. W. G. Parker, 52, Beckenham Road, Penge, £1; and Mr. R. F. R. Conder, 7, Bishop Terrace, Rothesay, N.B., £1. Penknives have been forwarded to the competitors whose names appear below:

J. Adams, Heath, Crayford, Kent.
J. Burton, 102, Glenparke Road, Forest Gate, E.
A. Davis, 17, Eve Road, Leytonstone.
Mrs. Greig, Hydropathic, Slateford, Midlothian.
Mrs. L. J. Parry, Riverdale, Carrog, Corwen, N. Wales.
Miss M. Gyles, 98, Lower Baggot Street, Dublin.
Mrs. Reed, Porloch, Fassett Road, Surbiton.
F. C. Perry, 39, Ilbers Street, Green's Park, London, W.
W. W. Ranson, 22, Lutton Place, Edinburgh.
H. P. Wright, 72, Everlina Road, Nunhead.
S. S. Smith, 85, Edith Road, West Kensington.
E. Berryman, 55, High Street, Cefn Coed, Merthyr Tydfil.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE CONTENTS OF

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A Question of Art. *F. Frankfort Moore.*
Illustrated by R. Sauber, R.B.A.

The Paris Exhibition of 1900. *M. Griffith.*
Illustrated by A. Robida.

In the Abyss. *H. G. Wells.*
Illustrated by Warwick Goble.

The White Slaves of England. *R. H. Sherard.*
No. 2.—THE NAILMAKERS OF BROMSGROVE. Illustrated by H. Piffard.

The Shah-in-Shah. *Moulvie Rafiuddin Ahmad.*
Illustrated with photographs.

Ostrich Farming in California. *Edwin Causton.*
Illustrated with photographs.

Secrets of the Courts of Europe. *Allen Upward.*
Second Series. No. 2.—"THE GHOST OF THE WINTER PALACE."
Illustrated by Hal Hurst, R.B.A.

Gold and Gilt. *Clifton Bingham.*

The Bands of the British Army. *Robert Machray.*
Illustrated by Seymour Nation.

Heart and Lip. *Mrs. Henry Mansergh.*
Illustrated by G. Grenville Manton.

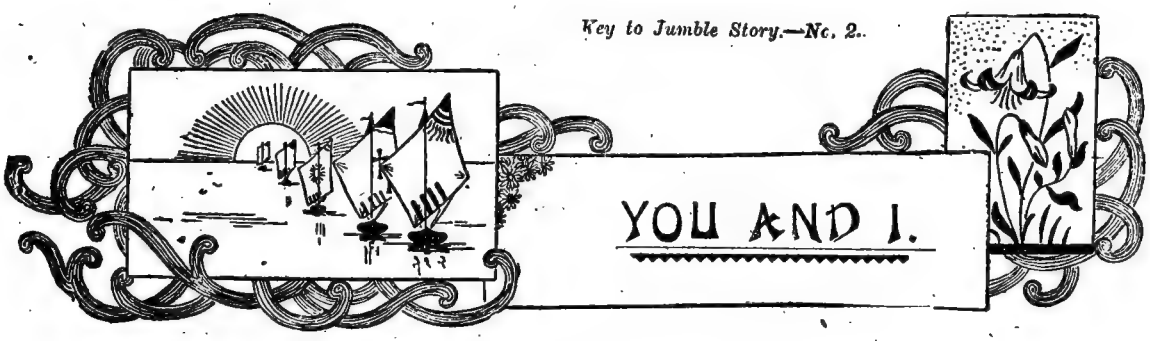
The Nursery of the British Navy. *Archibald S. Hurd.*
Illustrated with photographs.

The Wives of the Cabinet. *Marie A. Belloc.*
Illustrated with photographs.

The Royalists' Ride. *Cranstoun Metcalfe.*
Illustrated by A. Jule Goodman.

How Lord Carew was Trapped. *Cuthbert Barmby.*
Illustrated by Trevor Haddon.

Key to Jumble Story.—No. 2.



A MAN and a woman. A pathway white with the milky pallor of the moon. Shadows lurking on every side, emblematical of their two lives.

Lovers. Oh, yes—or why was her cheek stained red as those roses sleeping within reach of her fingers, which were locked in the man's palm? He tried to speak, but his voice was choked by emotion. This was good-bye.

The woman raised her eyes, her lips, and the anguish of parting was forgotten in the ecstasy of a long embrace.

"I shall remember," she whispered, "always! You and I have been more than all the world to each other, you and I!"

These three words were repeated in lingering accents, that faltered and ended in a sigh.

"Stay," he answered passionately, "life is only an hour; take all that it can give while love is in your soul. To-morrow the summer may be over, the flowers will shrivel up, and we shall be old."

"And age spells death," murmured the woman with a shudder.

The man gazed rapturously on the beauty of her face. How pure it looked in the pale light! What a mask, what a mockery!

Yet, good or evil, he loved her; and the fragrance of the summer night was creeping into his very being; everything spoke of hitherto undreamed possibilities.

"Why must you go?" he asked fiercely, "you have no tie in New York! Your home? Bah! What is a woman's home before she marries? Stay, and be my wife."

The woman untangled her fingers, and passed them over her brow.

The grass was wet with dew, and there were drops of agony upon her forehead.

One word broke hoarsely from her lips: "*No!*"

"If you love me, why in the name of——"

But she clasped her hands, intreating silence.

"Ask for no explanations. Would I had never come to England, to lose my soul in yours. I return to-morrow, it is inevitable. I have two things to seek, Heaven only knows if I shall find them."

"What?" he questioned.

"Rest and repentance!"

As she spoke she broke away, rushed wildly on, till the shadows hid her white gowned figure, and she was lost in mystery.

The following day she sailed, and the man saw her no more.

He only treasured a few parched rose leaves, and her address in New York City.

But the fire of love burnt still in his soul, and at last he wrote to the woman who had said "No."

"I must follow you" (he penned the lines feverishly) "to your home, dearest, and plead again for the love you gave and denied. Remember your own words: 'We have been all the world to each other—you and I.' Cable me the single syllable, 'Come,' and as fast as the seas will bring me, I will come to kneel at your feet."

* * * * *

A woman was lying dead, with roses white and yellow in her hands. She was beautiful in death as in life.

She had found what she sought, rest and repentance!

Beside her still image sat her husband, his head bent, and one hand stretched across his face hiding the awful expression thereon. But the veins on that sinewy hand seemed bursting through the flesh, while his parted lips were dry and bloodless.

Between his trembling fingers he held a letter, addressed to his dead wife in her maiden name. He had only just opened it.

That morning's mail made the cold form of marble beauty horrible in his eyes. Vengeance was turning his soul to gall, mingled with the awful jealousy of the bereaved.

"He shall follow her to her home," he muttered, crumpling her lover's letter with suppressed passion.

Then he wrote the cable: "*Come!*"

* * * * *

Two men stood face to face. A lover and a husband.

One with hope in his heart, the other maddened by his wrongs.

"You have come for my wife," he said slowly, "she is not here, but you shall go to her."

The lover staggered back, and fell heavily with a groan to the earth.

Only a cloud of smoke rose between his body and the woman's husband.

No horror crept through the murderer's veins.

"They are together now," he said, "in the land of falsehood and treachery. Let them love there, if they can."

Two days later the police received a detailed account of the crime, written by the slayer's hand, telling them where to find the murdered man.

"You need not seek for me," he wrote in conclusion. "I have gone where no one will discover me. Justice has been done, that is enough——"

Here the writing ceased abruptly, and the two men the woman had deceived were buried in oblivion.

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

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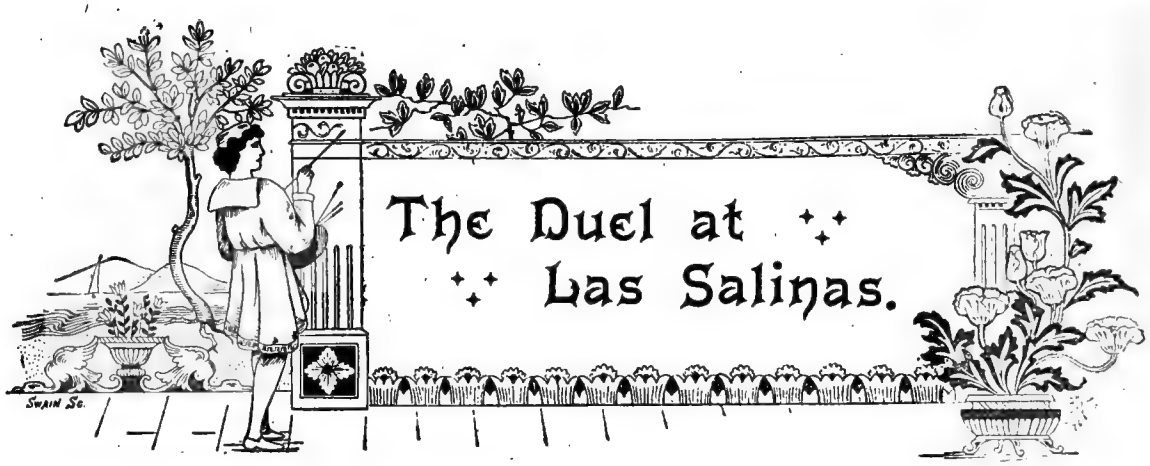

The Duel at Las Salinas.

Don Mariano Delgado and his English friend, on their way to Las Salinas, rode to the edge of the Mesa where it drops abruptly down to the lower levels. They were forty miles east of the Rio Grande, and fifty or sixty miles from Albuquerque. There lay before them a wide plain which rose into low tablelands off to the south and east. Far to the north-west towered the bold, handsome contours of the Sandia Mountains. Upon the plain, miles away from the foot of the Mesa, two large circular spots shone dazzlingly white. Don Mariano pointed them out to his companion.

"They are the salinas," he said. "Now let us look for the waggons. They should be in sight by this time. Ah, there they are. They will get a loading by noon."

Three waggons, each drawn by four mules, came round a bend of the Mesa at its foot, crawling along towards the white spots on the prairie. They were part of Don Mariano's ranch outfit going to the salinas for salt.

"Let us ride on to the salinas and await them there," said Don Mariano, and the two horsemen picked their way down the rough burrow trail to the plain, then put their horses to a long gallop, which brought them in half-an-hour to the salt lakes—for the salinas literally are lake basins packed solidly with salt. Part of their surface was smooth and level, like a water surface. Other places were rough, and dug out in great holes like cellars, showing where salt-gatherers had been at work. Deeply worn trails led to the lakes from the north, the west, and the south, and the ground about them was trodden with the feet of sheep, horses, and cattle and the wild beasts of the plain, drawn hither by their hunger for salt.

Going out upon one of the basins for a closer examination, the Englishman found that the pure white salt seen upon the surface was only an incrustation a half-inch thick, and that beneath this stratum the salt was darker, as if discoloured by earthy matter.

"How came the salt beds here?" he asked Don Mariano. "Are there salt springs at the bottom of the basins?"

The Don shrugged his shoulders. "*Quien sabe?*" he answered. "They have always been here. The Spanish colonists who first came to New Mexico, 300 years ago, got their salt here, and their descendants have done the same to this day. Since the railway came the salt we use on our tables, and much that we use for other purposes, is brought from the States. Yet many of the native people still get their salt from here, as my teams come to-day to get the year's supply for the stock upon my ranches. The trails you see centring here are worn by the travel of hundreds of years. And the buffalo and antelope in old times knew the salinas. Ah, I did not think an antelope was left so near the Rio Grande."

At the further end of the further basin three antelopes stood at the edge eagerly nibbling salt. Their hunger for salt had overcome their fear of man, and they acted as if unaware of the two men, who watched the timid, graceful creatures as the Don went on:

"I can remember the time when we had to have weapons in our hands and be a good-sized party when we came here for salt. The Mescalero Apachés and the Navajoes were liable to come as far as the salt lakes, and they were always hostile. The Comanches were supposed to be friendly with the New Mexicans, but even they were not always to be trusted when they met a weak party out on the plains. There has been a good deal of Indian fighting, first and last, about these basins and the trails leading to them. There was a duel fought here many years ago that was very remarkable. It occurred long before I was born, but the story has been handed down in our family, for my grandfather, Don Porfirio Delgado, was present when it occurred. It came about though a foolish promise that a Mexican made a Comanche chief, which he thought he would never be called on to fulfil.

"The man was a Comanchero as we say, who went out on the plains every year to trade with the Comanches. To carry through a bargain, or to help himself out of some tight place, he promised the Indian that he would give him his daughter for a wife when she should have grown large enough to marry. He was not called on to redeem his promise, for he was dead when the Indian demanded the girl, but it made trouble enough for other people, as you shall hear, if you care to listen to the story.

"It came about in this way. My grandfather, Don Porfirio Delgado, had come from his hacienda out to the salinas in August with a large party of his people to get his year's supply of salt. They came with a caravan of pack mules and carettas, as we call the old-fashioned carts made wholly of wood and raw hide, and drawn by oxen yoked by the horns. So many of his men at that season of the year were away herding sheep and cattle that to fill up his party he had brought with him some of the women that lived on his estate to help in their places.

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"Among them was Manuelita Trujillo, the Comanchero's daughter, then an orphan girl, sixteen years old. Our people, you know, mature early, and she was a young woman at that time, and a handsome one. Francisco Segura, a young *vaquero* in my grandfather's employ, thought so at any rate, and since she was one of the party, he had come along to herd the cattle and mules of the outfit.

"On the third day after arriving at the salinas they had all their carts and pack mules loaded with salt. They were yoking up the oxen ready for a start for home, when a band of Indians came riding towards them from the mesas. Not knowing to what tribe they belonged, the Mexicans drew their carts into a circle, secured mules and oxen, got their firearms ready, and waited. When the Indians came near our people saw that they were Comanches, and felt easier in their minds; but still they knew that they could not trust them very far, in spite of the fact that they were at peace with the New Mexicans.

"The Indians halted just out of gunshot from the caravan, for they saw that our people had firearms and were on their guard. But their chief, a large fine-looking Indian, with war paint on his face, gave the peace sign and rode towards the caravan. Before he had come half-way down Don Porfirio recognised him, and the Mexican, who had fought against the Comanches in the past, said: 'It is Santarito.' All knew the name, for he was of the bravest and most warlike of the chiefs that rode on the plains. Manuelita knew about him, and at his coming she shrank behind the other women, and drew her *reboso* about her face, but he saw her.

"My grandfather has often described to me the way Santarito looked as he rode up to them on his war horse, a splendid mustang, full of fire and speed. He wore a hunting shirt, fringed leggings, and mocassins of buckskin, and in his black streaming hair were three eagle's feathers. Hung to his neck by a buckskin thong, and resting on his broad, sinewy chest, was a great star of gold set with precious stones, that he had taken from the uniform of some dead Mexican officer of high rank. Across his back was slung his bow and quiver of arrows, and he carried his long lance in his hand.

"When he had come quite near the party he stopped and spoke to my grandfather, calling him by name, for they had met before in war and peace. He spoke in Spanish, for it was told of him that he had been educated at a Franciscan Father's school, from which he had run away to join his wild tribesmen.

"'Señor Delgado,' he said, 'will you choose peace or war?'

"'We would have peace,' answered my grandfather. 'Why should we fight? The Comanches and the New Mexicans are friends.'

"'Then give up to me the girl Manuelita. Her father promised her to me when she was a child. Give her to me, and there shall be peace and gifts between us.'

"Don Porfirio looked towards Manuelita. She had sunk to the ground, her face ashy pale, her look full of horror.

"'What is this the chief says?' asked the Don of her. 'What does he mean by saying that your father promised you to him? Is it true?' She lifted her head. 'It is false,' she cried. 'My father never meant it. He had no right to give me, a Christian girl, to an Indian.'

"Don Porfirio looked very grave. He saw that some sort of a promise had been made, and knew that whether or not the father had spoken in jest, or had a right to give it, it would make no difference with the chief, who was there with his men behind him, and meant to have the girl. No one knew better than my grandfather the dangers and evil consequences of a fight with the Comanches at that time out on the lonely plain, encumbered with his loaded waggons, and far away from water.

"A third of his party were women, and the Indians outnumbered the men by two to one. The Comanches had no firearms, but they were brave fighters, and could do deadly work at close quarters with their bows and arrows. And then the women! If the Indians were victorious there was a certain and terrible fate for the men, but that of the women was as certain or worse. Manuelita was only an orphan girl whose father had been of no very good repute, and she had no relatives living to take up her cause.

"'Let the Comanchero's daughter be given up to the chief,' whispered some of the Mexicans whose wives and daughters were with them. 'She is but one, and it will save the lives of many. Her father liked the Comanches well enough, and she may get along as well among them. And did he not promise her to Santarito?'

"Manuelita heard, or felt, these whispers, and shuddered beneath the *reboso* she had drawn over her face. But there was one who came with her, and took her hand in his, and stood by her, saying that he would protect her while his life should last. It was Francisco Segura, the *vaquero*, and his example gave courage to others. Don Porfirio was not a man of a coward's way of thinking. He would protect his own whatever might befal, and Manuelita was of his household. He knew the risk he was taking for himself and his people when he said:

"'Santarito, the girl is not willing to go. Her father had not the right to say who would have her when she was a little child. She is under my protection, and shall remain with her own people, since she so chooses. See, here is a colt, fit for breaking next year, which I have reared to be my own horse. I will give him to you in acquittance of her father's promise.'

"The chief laughed scornfully, and made a gesture of contempt.

"'I will give you my own saddle besides,' the Don continued, 'so that you may be equipped in a manner befitting a great chief when you mount the colt next year.'

"Santarito's look was black, and he plainly was impatient to do the talking.

"'I count nothing for your colt and saddle,' he said. 'The girl I will have, with no words or waiting. For the last time I ask you, shall I take her in peace or in war?'

"'Let it be war, since you will have it so,' said Don Porfirio growing angry in turn. 'I have offered you all I have to give.'

"Santarito gave a swift glance round towards his band and lifted his lance. But he remained where he was and did not give the signal to his men to attack. He was not the head chief of his tribe, and it might be a serious thing for him to break a treaty on his own responsibility. Besides, he knew that if it came to battle some of his men would be killed, however the affair turned in the end.

"'We may settle the matter another way if you choose,' he said. 'Come out and fight me single-handed before all our men. Face to face we will decide whether I or your people shall have the girl. Or, if you are too old, send one of your younger men.'

"He looked as he spoke to Francisco Segura, standing

at Manuelita's side. At this word, Francisco took a step forward.

"'I will fight you,' he called out. 'Don Porfirio, give me leave to fight the Comanche chief.'

"Santarito looked at him, and his lip curled. 'I am a chief,' he said, 'and he is only a cowherd. But let him come out and be killed. I will carry his scalp on my lance when I ride with Manuelita back to our rancheria.'

"'Go, since you ask it, and God be with you,' said the Don to Francisco. 'But ride my black horse. You know him, for you broke him as a colt. He will not flinch or fail you.'

"On the Don's black horse, the swiftest in the Rio Grande valley, Francisco rode out to meet the chief. He carried in his hand a gun, and upon his saddle horn his braided lasso was loosely coiled. The women lamented and the men looked very grave at his prospects, for he could give but a single shot with his gun, while the Indian's quiver was full of arrows, every one of which he would send in surely in the time it would take Francisco to reload his piece. And then there was the lance, and Francisco had none.

"Santarito rode back, keeping to the left until he had reached a point equally distant from his band and the caravan. Francisco took up a similar position on the right, and the two faced each other a hundred paces apart. The Indian laid his lance in the loops of his saddle and took his bow and half-a-dozen arrows in his hand. Then with a shout to his pony he dashed upon Francisco, waiting to receive him with fusil raised. Half way to him the Comanche swung down sidewise from his saddle, so that his pony's body should protect him from a shot, and swerved the animal to pass Francisco in a circle. At the same time, from under its neck he sent arrow after arrow at him as fast as he could count.

"The second arrow sent struck Francisco's saddle, and the next passed through his sleeve, grazing his shoulder. At the same moment he fired, aiming to hit the Comanche's head beneath the pony's neck. The bullet missed Santarito, but it was a lucky shot for all that, for it struck the bow, breaking it. Instantly the Indian swung up in his saddle, grasped his lance, and charged straight at his enemy.

"Francisco set spurs to meet the charge, at the same time lifting from his saddle horn the coils of his lasso. With the gun held in his left hand, he parried the lance thrust, wheeled his horse behind the Indian's pony as it went by like a flash, and flung his lasso after Santarito. His aim was true. The noose fell over the Comanche's head and shoulders, and, before he could throw it off, Francisco had caught a turn of the braided rope about his saddle horn, wheeled his horse, and set the spurs hard into his flanks.

"With a bound the fiery animal was off and away, jerking the Indian from his saddle, over his pony's back, and dragging him helpless over the prairie. As he fell to the ground the lasso slipped above his shoulders, but tightened again about his neck, and held.

"At sight of this, the Indians gave their war cry, and started for Francisco. He did not pull rein till they were half way to him. Then he checked his horse, leapt to the ground, threw the lasso from the Indian's neck—the neck was broken—plunged his knife twice into the Comanche's heart to make his work sure, took the gold star from the chief's breast, and springing into the saddle dashed back to the caravan with a score of arrows whistling after him. The Indians pulled up their ponies before getting very near the Mexican party, and turned back to where their dead chief lay. They made no further hostile move, but seemed stunned and downcast at the result of the duel. They did not wait long but rode away to the eastward in the direction where their rancherias lay carrying with them Santarito's body bound across the back of his war horse.

"This is the story of the duel at Las Salinas. Francisco, of course, was a great hero after the affair. He married Manuelita that autumn, as he had wanted to do for years past, and he became head *vaquero* on my grandfather's ranches, so they were both prosperous and happy.

"When, after many years, his working days were over, his son took his place on my father's estate."

Just as Don Mariano finished his story the sound of hoofbeats near at hand caused the two to look round. The approaching waggons were still a mile away, but the foreman had ridden ahead to select the spot where they should haul up. He was a stalwart, handsome Mexican, about forty years of age, and the American noted his perfect seat in the saddle. He rode up to them, bowed respectfully, and stood awaiting any orders that Don Mariano might have to give.

"Have you your gold medal with you, Francisco?" asked the Don after their talk about the location of the waggons was ended.

For answer the Mexican put his hand inside his shirt collar and drew forth a large star of gold, somewhat dulled and worn, but still holding several of the brilliants with which it had once been thickly set.

"Yes, I see. You are taking good care of it," said Don Mariano. Then turning to the Englishman, "It is the gold star that his grandfather took, seventy years ago, on this spot, from Santarito."

P. McArthur.

MELODY.

The August number of this delightful musical magazine, which is published on the first of the month, contains an excellent variety of compositions by some of our best known musicians. There are songs by Liza Lehmann, Benjamin Godard, Blumenthal, G. H. Clutsam, Miss Davis, Cotsford Dick, Milton Wellings, besides solos for the organ, piano, violin, mandoline, and guitar, by other well-known composers. The number is completed by a polka expressly composed for *Melody* by R. Farban, and some notes on musical topics by Mr. R. S. Hichens, and Dr. Joseph Bennett.

Such a musical treat, as above indicated, can only be enjoyed in one way, and that is by buying the August number of *Melody*, price sixpence.

Please remember that no musical magazine is so well printed or contains so many original compositions as *Melody*, whilst the fact that *Melody* is printed on paper full sheet music size has made this popular musical magazine at once take the premier position, a position which becomes more and more impregnable as the volumes of *Melody* appear month by month.

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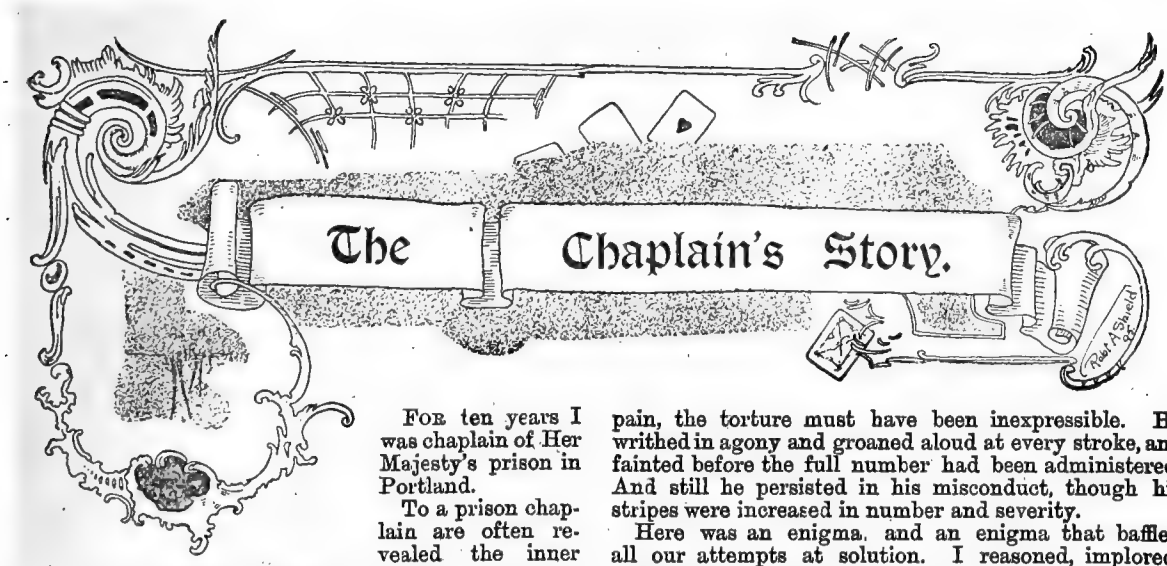

The Chaplain's Story.

For ten years I was chaplain of Her Majesty's prison in Portland.

To a prison chaplain are often revealed the inner workings of the passions that produce crime, and during my term of office many a heart was laid open to my inspection.

Still there were some who were unfathomable; but of all the convicts, many of them the lowest scum of society, I was brought in contact with, there were none whom I understood less than Edward Dominey.

There was nothing of the criminal in his appearance, rather the opposite. About thirty, tall, muscular, and well proportioned, with frank, open countenance, he was the beau ideal of attractive manhood. Nor was physical appearance all. He was well educated, well bred, and of engaging address, and all the faults in his character that I could discern were an overbearing and resentful temper.

He was serving two years for forgery, and forgery so heartless that the judge told him that his sentence would have been more severe if it had not been for his excellent character.

But what puzzled us most was his behaviour in gaol. Notwithstanding his intelligence and refinement, he was always being punished for some glaring offence, and singular to state, his insubordination was periodical.

The Governor, doctor, and myself were greatly pained and greatly puzzled thereat. I often spoke to him about it, and when these fits of misconduct were absent his behaviour could not be more exemplary. He was examined to see if he suffered from mental derangement, but the doctor could find nothing wrong with him.

Every punishment then in vogue was inflicted on him; even applications of the dreaded "cat." At first the Governor was disposed to overlook his faults and sent me to remonstrate with him, but the only result was that his conduct became more outrageous the more leniently he was dealt with, and there was no course open but to apply the lash.

Never shall I forget his first flogging. He seemed to feel the degradation more than the torture, and Heaven knows that was awful enough. Twenty lashes with the dreaded instrument is a prospect that makes the hardest and most callous tremble, and he was neither. He seemed to feel that this punishment put him out of the pale of respectable men—that the scars would be the ineffaceable stamp of his degradation.

To him, who hardly knew the meaning of physical pain, the torture must have been inexpressible. He writhed in agony and groaned aloud at every stroke, and fainted before the full number had been administered. And still he persisted in his misconduct, though his stripes were increased in number and severity.

Here was an enigma, and an enigma that baffled all our attempts at solution. I reasoned, implored, expostulated, prayed with him, but all to no purpose. Although he was nearly heartbroken on such occasions, his answer invariably was: "It cannot be helped; it must be as it is."

* * * * *

Two years passed away from the time he was first flogged, and I almost despaired of ever having any effect on him when an accident occurred in the quarries.

A party of convicts, among whom was Dominey, were removing a large block of stone, when from some unexplainable cause it gave way and Dominey was caught under it. He was rescued as soon as possible, and taken to the prison hospital. The doctor soon came to the opinion that his spine was fatally injured, and that he could only live a few days at most.

As soon as he could speak he expressed a desire to see me, and I went. He took my hand in silence, and after a pause, said: "I am fatally injured, Mr. Selame; I should not like to die without thanking you for your goodness to me, although you thought it all thrown away. Do you know why I am here, sir?"

"Yes, you were injured by the stone falling."

"No, I don't mean that. Do you know why I am in gaol and why I behaved so badly since I came?"

"You were sent here, you know, for forgery."

"Yes, that is why I was sent here by the judge," he rejoined solemnly, "but I am here, sir, because I am a murderer."

I looked pityingly and incredulously at him, for I feared his brain must have been injured, too, in the shock. He saw my look and said earnestly: "It is true, sir, I am here because I am a murderer. If it had not been for that I should not have been here on a charge of forgery. Murder is my offence. But I will tell you my history and then you will see what an overbearing temper has brought me to."

After consulting with the doctor I complied, and he narrated the following strange and fearful facts:

"I was brought up at a small town in the Midlands. My father was a gentleman farmer and intensely proud of me, who was his eldest son, and spoken of on all sides as a sharp boy. He sent me to a preparatory school, thence to a country grammar school, and at the age of eighteen I was placed in the branch bank in our town with the prospect of rising to a decent competence.

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"I said it was an overbearing temper that brought me here. The truth is that my temper from infancy had always been ungovernable. I was petted and spoiled at home; I was not allowed to be crossed, and, being a sturdy lad, I generally got my own way wherever I went.

"I fear I was a bully at school, and I was more than once in danger of being expelled. But the masters were proud of me, for, speaking frankly, I did them credit, and no one knew that better than myself.

"Six months after I entered the bank, Edgar Sturmell, who had been my rival at school, and disputed precedence with me in everything was, by some strange fatality, appointed to a post in the same bank. The struggle for the mastery between us became a thousand-fold intensified. We disputed precedence in our work; we were members of the same club, and there was a jealous rivalry between us in billiards; we were both good athletes, and on the cricket ground and river our mutual hate and jealousy had plenty of food to feed on.

"This continued for about six years, and all might have gone on as heretofore, when (fatality again!) love came like a sword between us.

"The wife of Mr. Willis, our manager, died, and his sister came to keep house for him. Sturmell and I were regular visitors at the manager's, and, truth to tell, I believe invited us so often that we might heal our dissensions.

"Soon after her arrival Willis gave a party to introduce her to his friends. Sturmell and I were there, of course. Would to Heaven I had never seen her! Would to Heaven that she had never crossed my path!

"Ethel Willis was a tall, dark girl of twenty. I believe I forgot good manners, and stared in wonderment at her. All the beauties of our town were plain compared to her. Her features were as regular as those of a Greek statue; her form and carriage were those of a queen. Her voice seemed more musical than any voice I had ever heard.

"But her eyes! There was the charm! To describe them would be impossible, but it seemed to me that one glance from them meant that no man could look but to love.

"Time after time since then have I cursed the Power that created her and her eyes. Fate, I have told myself scores of times, formed them to destroy me.

"Everybody there sought her out and owned her sway. She, quite unaffected, not one whit prouder, moved among us with a sunny smile and irresistible look that conquered all.

"I noted with a jealous eye that Sturmell was very attentive to her, and like the vain fool that I was, I cursed him in my heart for his presumption. From that hour he and I were rivals, in love as in everything else.

"It was at this time that an instrument was put in my hands by the Evil One that wrought my everlasting ruin. I went to London for a few days, and whilst there attended a *séance* of hypnotism. I was intensely interested; I sought an interview with the professor, and to make a long story short, I found that I was possessed of that dread power myself. A knife in the hands of a homicidal maniac would not be so dangerous.

"Nearly a year after Ethel Willis came to her brother's, I asked for an interview with her. I was shown into the drawing-room where I found her alone.

"'Ethel,' I said after a few commonplace words, throwing the burden and passion of my soul into the tone, 'I have sought you to-night to tell you that I love you. I never saw a woman like you before; none has ever touched my heart except you. I would do anything or give up anything for your sake. Tell me, oh, tell me,' I shrieked with wild passion, as I did not see what I sought in her face, 'tell me that you love me.'

"Alas for her answer! With infinite distress and in a voice that almost choked her, she told me that she would give worlds to say otherwise, but she did not love me, and asked to be allowed to be my humble friend.

"Passion reasserted itself, and I laughed bitterly. Then a light broke in upon me, and I asked in a schooled voice: 'Is Edgar Sturmell the favoured one?'

"She trembled like a leaf, and I read her answer in her face. 'Then he shall never have you,' I cried; 'you shall both die first. Look at me,' as the remembrance of my power come like a lightning flash. She looked. I exerted my will to the utmost to control her. But she neither quailed nor moved a muscle. When a woman loves she is proof against any other power. I saw that I had lost, and left the room. I never saw her again.

"From that day for many months I was a madman. I gave full play to every evil passion with which I was tempted, till my heart became a hell.

"About a week afterwards Sturmell, blind fool, said to me genuinely delighted, though with a little superiority in his tone. 'Congratulate me, Dominey, I proposed to Ethel Willis last night, and was made a happy man. Willis gave me his brotherly blessing. To tell you the truth, old fellow, I thought you had your eyes in that quarter, and I was horribly jealous.'

"'Oh, no,' I replied with as off-hand a manner as I could assume, and, putting the greatest possible amount of sting into the words, ended the sentence with a laugh.

"Sturmell looked at me in silence; then turned on his heel and left me without another word.

"Then the resolve grew upon me that Sturmell should never have her. It must have been the devil that put the remembrance of my fatal power into my head again. I laughed wildly. Yes, Sturmell might succumb. I tried my power on him, and found that sometimes I could control him. But to separate them was not enough for me now. I must have revenge. I must wreck their happiness as mine had been wrecked. It was only charitable to believe that I was insane.

"One night Sturmell and I were engaged till late in balancing the books. There was no one in the bank but ourselves. Mr. Willis had gone home to dinner, and would return to relieve me. Sturmell had already been to his meal.

"Some fatalism or some devil caused Sturmell to begin talking of his sweetheart. Oh, why in the name of Heaven did he? He showed me a smoking cap she had embroidered for him with his initials. It was too much for me to bear. I literally thirsted for his blood. I tried to put him under my power. I succeeded. Then a terrible idea flashed across my mind, and I acted on it. It was born in a moment, but that is no palliation, for it was my brooding hate that gave birth to it.

"I suggested to him, while he was under the hypnotic influence, that Mr. Willis did not look with much favour on his engagement. Then I wormed out of him that this was really the fact, and that he had been much irritated in consequence. Then, like the devil I was, I suggested to him that he should that night murder Mr. Willis.

"The next morning broke with the news flying swiftly through the town that Mr. Willis had been foully

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murdered the previous night in the bank, and Edgar Sturmell had been arrested.

"I cannot describe my feeling for the next month or two. I longed to go and confess, but the same devil that had tempted me to the deed, kept me back, and told me I had done well.

"At the assizes Edgar Sturmell was found guilty.

"He declared that he must have been insane, for he had no recollection of the deed, and his feelings for the murdered man were of the kindliest.

"As the judge's solemn words pronounced his doom, there was a wild shriek in the court. Alas! only another weight in my burden of guilt—Ethel Willis is now the inmate of an asylum, hopelessly insane.

"Edgar Sturmell did not live long enough to feel the hangman's rope. One morning he was found dead in his cell. How he met with his death was never ascertained.

"These are my crimes: I had murdered two and deprived another of reason. Can there be forgiveness for such as I?

"My crimes brought their own punishment. I have known all the pangs of the lost. I dared not confess, nor would confession have undone my crimes; I took a strong course. I committed an act of forgery that I knew would place me here for a number of years.

"I may say that I have always looked upon penal servitude as a living death, compared with which the hangman's rope is a thousand times more preferable.

"But since I came here I found that that was not punishment enough. Hence I became insubordinate that I might taste the 'cat.' You can think what that meant to me.

"But my scarred back, my tortured spirit, my living death have not brought peace. They are nothing to the pangs of conscience. I have suffered—oh! how I have suffered! Can there be mercy for me? Tell me, Mr. Selame, was ever guilt so black as mine? Could an eternity of suffering wash out of remembrance such crimes as mine are?"

* * * * *

Very tenderly and gently did I point him to the Great Consolation, not minimising his guilt, not pretending that his self-inflicted punishment could win pardon for him, but showing him that eternal mercy could even forgive such as he. He lingered for three days with only momentary gleams of consciousness, and his spirit fled without further conversation between us.

The tale he told me seemed so wildly improbable that I was at pain to verify it. I found on visiting the town where he had lived that the facts were quite in accordance with what he told me.

REGINALD BAIRD.

A Little Lunatic.

THE last good-bye had been said, and the comfortable country carriage, drawn by its two glossy bay horses, had disappeared round a knoll.

"They is do'rn," remarked the baby, as if just in possession of a solemn fact.

"Torse they is do'rn, you blessed baby," answered Florence, his fifteen-year-old sister, stooping down and lifting him in her strong arms and kissing him.

The baby, let me remark, was a sturdy boy of four, with bright brown eyes and red cheeks—cheeks so plump that when you had a side view of his face you could only see the tip of his little pug nose.

"Well, if anybody has earned a holiday, they are father and mother," said Cassie.

"Cassie, dear, your sentiment is better than your grammar," laughed Rose, the eldest of the three sisters.

"Never you mind my grammar, Miss Eglantine. I mayn't have much 'book larnin',' but I've got a head on my shoulders, as father frequently remarks—which is a good thing, for I couldn't bear to look at myself in the glass if I hadn't—and, besides, how could I do my hair up so neatly"—Cassie's hair was the joke of the family—"if I hadn't? And now I'm going upstairs to cry, and I'll be down in three minutes to help with the supper."

It was a pleasant scene in the old-fashioned, roomy kitchen an hour later. Supper was laid, and Rose had just stopped to ask the baby whether he would rather have honey or preserves, when a stealthily step was heard upon the porch. A moment later the door was pushed slowly open, and a man walked in.

"Good-morning, ladies. Is your father at home?"

"N—no," faltered Rose, trying to settle to her own satisfaction whether this dirty-looking stranger might be some new neighbour, who had come upon legitimate business, or whether he was her one horror—a tramp.

"Any of your big brothers in?" with rather a jocular manner.

"N—no, sir."

"And I don't see anything in the shape of a bulldog loafin' round," he added.

"Our dord, he is dead," explained the baby solemnly.

"Well, then, ladies, since you are likely to be alone, I think I'll stay and keep you company; and since you press me, I will have some supper and spend the evening here. Don't go to any extra work for me, though; it looks very nice. I'm rather hungry, so you may dish up that ham at once. I've usually a very fair appetite, and I'm sure I will relish it."

He tossed his hat down beside the chair which he drew up to the table.

With the light falling on his dirty, insolent face, Rose knew that her greatest dread was before her. With her knees sinking under her she started towards the stairs, for she felt that she must let the intrepid Cassie know—and find out what she advised.

"Where are you goin', my dear?" asked the tramp suspiciously. "You've not got any big cousin or uncle or anything of that kind upstairs that you are going to call to tea, have you?"

"Oh, no, there is no one upstairs but my poor sister," she managed to gasp. She could not have told why she said "poor sister," unless it was from the sense of calamity which had overtaken them all.

Rose dragged herself up the narrow inclosed stairs, and into Cassie's room.

"Well, Rose, you must be about tired out. You come upstairs as if you were eighty," said Cassie, looking up from the shoe she was fastening. "Why, what ails you? You look as if you had seen a ghost?"

"Oh, Cassie, there is one of them downstairs!" came in a whisper.

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"What do you mean, Rose? A ghost downstairs?"

"No—no—a tramp."

"Whew!" and Cassie gave a low whistle. "And I suppose you're scared?"

"Oh, Cassie, I feel as if I were choking! Do hurry down; he may be killing poor little Florence and the baby. What shall we do? The baby has told him we are all alone."

"The baby ought to be soundly spanked for that."

"What can we do? Try to think."

Cassie sat swinging the button-hook in her hand, and thinking very hard and fast.

"Does he know I am here?"

"Yes; I've told him."

"Then it would be no use for me to pretend to be Ned," thinking aloud.

"I'm afraid not."

Another silence dedicated to thought.

"Rose?"

"Yes."

"I'm going to be crazy. I'm going to chase him off the farm."

"Oh, Cassie, you can't! He is a great, big, impudent wretch. What folly to talk about chasing him off the farm!"

"It's our only chance."

"Don't count on me. I can't help you. My teeth are chattering with terror, and my legs are doubling up under me this very minute. I couldn't help chase a fly."

"You can scream, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, I can do that."

"Well, you can do the screaming, and I'll do the chasing. Rush downstairs and scream, and bang the door, and just shriek: 'She's out—she's out—she's coming downstairs!' And you'll see what a perfectly beautiful lunatic I will be. It's a good thing I have this old dress on, and only one shoe. Now make a rush and scream."

Rose's overstained nerves were her best allies, and as she flew down the stairs it was the easiest thing in the world for her to give one piercing shriek after another. They resounded from the narrow stairway through the kitchen, and for the moment seemed to paralyse its inmates. As she burst in upon them, Florence was transfixed midway of the table and the fireplace, with the plate of ham in her hands; the baby had climbed upon a chair, and the tramp had risen with a bewildered air from the table. As her skirts cleared the door she turned and slammed it, and flung herself against it, shrieking: "She's out—she's out of her room!"

To the mystified Florence there came but one solution to her behaviour—fright had overthrown her sister's reason, and with a wail she rushed towards her, crying: "She's crazy! Oh, she's crazy!"

"Who's crazy?" yelled the tramp.

The baby, now wildly terrified, set up a loud weeping, while from the stairway came a succession of blows and angry demands that the door be opened, a moment later it was forced ajar, and a head crowned with a mass of tossed hair was thrust out, and quickly followed by a hand in which was clutched a gun.

"She's got the gun! Oh, Florence, run to the baby!" cried Rose.

"Who's that?" demanded the apparition, making a rush towards the tramp.

"Here, keep off! Leave me alone!" backing away and warding off an expected blow.

She stood before him, tall, strong and agile.

"I won't leave you alone. What do you mean by locking me in that room? I'm no more crazy than you are. What's this?" as she stumbled over the hat which the tramp had laid aside, and into which he had deposited the silver spoons from the table. "Oh, I see; you are all in league to rob me of my gold and precious stones!" and catching up the hat on the muzzle of the gun, she gave it a whirl which sent the spoons glittering in every direction; then advancing upon him she thrust hat and gun into the face of the horrified man. With a volley of oaths he sprang backwards, upsetting his chair and falling over it.

"Oh, don't kill him, Cassie! don't kill him!"

"We'll have a merry time," gaily dancing about him, and prodding him sharply with the gun as he tried to scramble to his feet.

"Keep off with that gun, can't you?" he yelled. "Can't you hold her, you screaming idiots?" and half crawling, half pushing, he gained the kitchen door, which had stood partly open since he had entered.

"Where are you going, my pretty maid, don't you try to get away?" shouted Cassie, as she sprung lightly after him. The tramp stayed not to answer her question, nor to obey her command, but clearing the door, fled wildly away through the dusk.

"Here's your hat: I'll fire it after you," she called, and a sharp report rang out on the quiet evening air, then all was still.

The three girls stood for a moment in the door, watching the dim outline flying across the meadow in the direction of the highway.

"He'll think twice before inviting himself to supper another time," quietly remarked Cassie, with a satisfied smile.

"Oh, Cassie, darling, you have saved our lives," cried Florence, flinging her arms round her sister.

"I don't know about that; but I've saved the spoons, anyway."

"There, there, baby," going to the still afflicted boy; "don't cry any more. Sister Cassie was just making a dirty old tramp hop; she didn't really shoot him, she was playing."

"Oh, Cassie, you splendid, brave girl. How did you ever happen to think to go crazy?" asked Rose, as she looked over her shoulder from the door she was barricading.

"Well, I knew something had to be done, and that just popped into my mind. I was doing 'Ophelia' the other day up in my room, so I was in practice, and didn't I make a sweetly pensive maniac? Now, I hope you girls will never again make disrespectful comments upon any little private theatricals of mine. If I had never cultivated my dramatic talents, what would have become of you, I'd like to know?" EDITH SUMMERS.

Jumbled Story Competition.

(No. 5.)

SEE OPPOSITE PAGE ☞

Six Prizes, one of £5 and five of £1 each, are offered to the competitors who most nearly put together the lines of the story appearing on the opposite page, in their original order. Each line is complete in itself, and the first line is in its correct position, but the title and signature are jumbled up.

Cut out the lines separately, and paste them up in what you consider to be their correct, readable order on one side of the paper, and send the story in an envelope marked "Jumble Story."

All competitions to be in by Tuesday, August 4th.

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Jumbled Story. } No. 5.

MAN O' WAR STICK.

Briefly, the situation was this: Lord Douglas had in a moment of pressing need, had tied himself down for a suitable trinket for a wedding present.

He was a hard working, capable man, if not particularly brilliant, and he had every right to expect that she would like to shriek. Here was an opportunity by which she might work the combination of Lord Deane."

For they had noticed that his lordship made himself dropped right at her feet. She had only to stretch this plot that she had devised. It was a chance, however, game. She had thought all the morning of some means to send the parcel which I received by mistake in spite of the fact that with every package he inclosed flowers and jewels. Certain it was that she was now pretty Mrs. Montague, and here was the solution.

And it was known that she was for ever in dearth of Douglas' compliments.' I still keep the necklace, and something less acceptable (and less substantial) than life to a very ineligible personage.

Now Diggles, as all the world knew, was brother-in-law to his old college friend, Deane; he had, in fact, intimated that he was. With his wife, however, it was different. Two roads lie before me, and I do not know which to take. Craven Road, Park Lane,' and below: 'With Lord Douglas and his jealous wife, and Lord Douglas and Rubett. As an esteemed customer she was privileged to leave her down in the country, through fear that she was brother-in-law to Mrs. Montague.

That afternoon Mrs. Deane dropped in at the well wife as they were taking their first sip of coffee one of unique form.

Perhaps, for this reason, she cultivated Lord Douglas, as every year advanced. Finally, he was compelled to reach his wife's ears that anything beyond the strictest known jewellers of Bond Street, Messrs Brightstone and declined to give the appointment of Minister of Pepotoi this post.

The blow had fallen on Deane and his pretty little letters. Among others was one which made him turn out her hand and take it, and she would win her uneaten breakfast. She read the letter through, and kept very well supplied with them.

He himself bore his years well, and looked, especially to Mrs. Montague; but whether this had anything by the five-o'clock post without fail. Would his lordship of Pepotoi, had long lived in hopes of obtaining the offering.

It should be mentioned, moreover, that Lord Douglas, line of acquaintanceship passed between Mrs. Montague and, with a mumbled apology, he gathered his other in his long frock coat, every inch the Cabinet Minister was in town.

His wife looked wistfully after him, and then at his post.

And Mrs. Deane chuckled to herself when the next man enter.

"Then you may leave it," said Lord Douglas. Although engrossed in the tray of knick-knacks which the the firm continued, holding up for inspection a necklace in his formal letter, that he had selected Diggles for the one, but a different one. and one of superior quality. On I ordered a pearl necklace, and this morning I receiv d two immense bronzes had been placed for the time. She seemed to grow stouter and shorter and redder counter. They were very sorry, but it had not arrived; this morning from Messrs. Brightstone and Rubett with the purchase.

"Lord Douglas has just ordered a similar one to this," in a loud voice, and strode angrily from the shop.

Messrs. Brightstone and Rubett bowed low to the glass doors swing open, and a tall, commanding-looking assistant was displaying, she noticed, herself unseen, the morning at breakfast. His face fell as he read the letter, post came in.

Could they send it off for his lordship? It would go it would come in a couple of hours.

Lord Douglas read this letter through three times; a card inside was written: 'To Mrs. Montague, 203, and himself.

"Is that pearl necklace ready yet?" he demanded.

Mr. Deane, the disappointed aspirant to the Ministership be good enough to give the address?

"203, Craven Road, Park Lane," replied his lordship. papers together and hastily left the room.

It meant a good deal more to him than people might have one at a bargain.

To make the situation clear, it should be added also "I have decided, after all, to give the position to direct to you, and hear what you said. Yesterday of ousting Diggles, and not to be missed.

Mrs. Deane's heart stopped beating. She felt as though her mouth took a determined expression.

"Have you any pearl necklaces?" she asked.

Messrs Brightstone and Rubett had a few in stock, to do with the matter it was not known. People said it had.

It happened that her search led her to a counter where very pleasant to that lively and vivacious widow.

Mrs Deane concluded the bargain, and drove away but, unfortunately, all of an inferior quality. Madame grew still paler.

She wondered, as she went home, if it was very wicked, it should have been his. It was clear to see that Diggles supposed.

At his office next morning the first thing Lord Douglas should be mistaken for his housekeeper, whenever he wander about the shop at will until she should chance on that letter to Diggles yet?"

No, my lord," the man replied; "I was about to address the envelope."

It was written in a feminine hand, and ran as follows:

"Dear Lord Douglas,—I am in terrible perplexity: I ought, I feel, to let your dear wife know everything I did was to write to Diggles, informing him of his appointment as Minister of Pepotoi. Then he looked at his very pale when he had read it. He studied it again, and that his lordship lived in mortal dread lest it should have learnt. But on second thoughts I determined await your reply as to what I shall do with it.—Yours had obtained it merely on account of the fact that he then he bit his lip hard, and his voice was very shaky, as, turning to his secretary, he said: "Have you posted sincerely,

Mary Deane.

"P.S.S.—I still feel that I ought to write to your wife.—M. D."

"P.S.—Your letter was such a disappointment. Will you not reconsider your decision?—M. D.

M. Jurcas.

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PAUPER BLUE-BLOOD

SUMMARY.

Georgina Pluff is a governess in the employ of the Ravenscrofts. Her charge is Eva, daughter of Sir Reginald and Lady Ravenscroft. Sefton, the only son, is engaged to Lady Norah Cannington, whose father, hearing on good authority of Sir Reginald's impending ruin, compels his daughter to write a letter to Sefton, saying that the engagement must be broken off. Before the financial crash arrives, Sir Reginald commits suicide in his own grounds, and Sefton's cup of bitterness is filled by the arrival of Lady Norah's letter. Georgina Pluff is aware of the late Sir Reginald's past, and threatens to expose his misdeeds unless she is married to Sefton. After the wedding Georgina visits her wealthy cousin, John Pluff, a retired grocer, and impresses him with her social position. Lady Norah receives a visit from a friend of Sefton, Douglas Shirling, who gives expression to his opinion concerning her treatment of Sefton. Georgina goes to stop with Pluff at Queen's Gate House. Lady Norah becomes engaged to the Duke of Malvern, but at the cost of her own happiness. Sefton's mother and sister go to stop at Ermyn Way, and he joins them.

CHAPTER X.

Tommy's Joke.

The Hon. Miss Shirling was wrapped in beautiful abstraction, her arms folded, her body sunk into the recesses of an enormous chair, half of which was occupied by a sleek red setter. At a table by the open window Sir Sefton sighed over a letter, which evidently caused him some annoyance, for he eventually tore up the sheet and an envelope addressed to Lady Ravenscroft at Queen's Gate House. He crossed to a sofa on which lay a pile of newspapers, selected one, and stood reading it at the back of Miss Shirling's chair.

This was her own most private sanctum, into which she had invited him to wipe off his arrears of correspondence, a strangely unfeminine room. The walls were decorated chiefly with a fine collection of horns, sporting pictures, and photographs of horses and dogs. Her literature ranged from the Queen to the Pink 'Un. Every imaginable paper lay strewn about, no books, save a volume of "Modern Dogs," and a racing calender.

Wrapped in beautiful abstraction.

She and Sefton had been chums since childhood. Her acquaintances knew her as Sarah Shirling, but to her intimates she was "Tommy," always Tommy, nothing more. That was the name she loved the best, the name that seemed part of herself. Petite, with the trimmest figure and the brightest eyes, she was one of the prettiest and smartest little women in the county. Some people called her empty-headed and wild, on account of her daring horsemanship and passion for the stables, but none could deny she was a Shirling to her finger-tips, her natural refinement was her salvation.

She leant her head as far back as possible, and tried to look at Sefton over her eyelids.

"It gives me an uncomfortable sensation, the feeling that you are standing there, like a ghost behind me. Won't you come and sit down?"

He did not answer her remark, but stiffened out his paper, and gave vent to a low laugh.

"What's the joke?" asked Tommy, passing her white hand over the setter's waving coat.

"Listen. Did you ever hear such an advertisement? What *are* we coming to? 'A lady of position would be received *sub rôsa* as paying guest in a titled family. County society; old family mansion; carriages kept; terms £500 a year.'"

"Who ever can it be?" asked Tommy curiously, rising to the disgust of the dog whose nose and front paws used her knees as a pillow. She took the paper from Sefton, and scanned the paragraph.

"I *should* like to know! Couldn't we find out? It would be such fun!"

Her suggestion was made purely for the sake of a joke, and from no prying meanness. She was utterly thoughtless, and in harmless merriment resolved to unearth the "titled family" for her own amusement.

"I know," she cried—"I'll write a letter, and ask for particulars."

"Wouldn't that be rather a shabby trick to play?"

"Not if we keep it quite to ourselves, don't tell a soul. I have all my letters forwarded from the club, and will use that address."

"But probably these people, whoever they are, will know all about you, and guess it is humbug."

Tommy shook her head wisely.

"I am not going to give my name, and there is just the chance they may not trouble to look me up. See," crossing to her writing table, "I shall word my epistle something like this."

She tore out the paragraph and pinned it on the top of her letter.

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"Let me see," biting the tip of her penholder. "Oh, yes, I have it. 'A lady of position would be glad to have particulars of the above advertisement, name of family, and in what county the "mansion" is situated, address.'

"'The President of the Sportswoman's Club,
"'106, Piccadilly.'"

"You ought not to do it, really," Sefton protested, hoping she wouldn't take his advice.

But feminine curiosity prevailed, and Tommy, laughing at his scruples, stuck down the envelope, addressing it in her dashing masculine hand.

The letter was posted, and the subject forgotten for the time.

His visit to Ermyn Way was making a fresh man of Sefton. No one had failed to notice on his arrival his altered looks, and unmistakable depression. They one and all determined to rouse and cheer him, and thought it a thousand pities that since his marriage he cooped himself up at Ravenscroft Park, and dropped most of his old friends.

"You see, mother," he explained, when the Dowager Lady Ravenscroft took him to task about this. "I absolutely have not the money to go into society, or Heaven knows I would not stay a day at home. It seems almost foolish clinging on to the old place, but I believe you would break your heart if it were sold, even though you never go there now."

"You are right, Sefton. It is a horrible idea to think that after centuries it should pass out of our family."

Biting the tip of her penholder.

Her son bowed his head without a protest. It appeared quite natural and right that he, as head of the old house, should martyr himself for the sake of the estate.

These days at Ermyn Way, with his mother and sister and a host of affectionate old friends, were very dear to him, though destined to be all too short.

Miss Shirling was always up early and had generally finished her breakfast before the rest of the household were down. Since Sefton's advent she had a companion at her lonely meal, for to sleep late on summer mornings was impossible to him.

She was pouring out his coffee and running her eyes over a pile of correspondence when a letter, re-addressed from the Sportswoman's Club and marked "Personal," met her glance. She held it up with a merry smile, addressing Sefton across the table.

He could not see the writing, only a large purple seal.

"Here it is at last," she cried. "The letter from the titled family."

But even as she spoke jestingly, a sudden qualm of conscience crept over her soul. Perhaps it *was* mean after all! What did it matter to her who these people were, or how they added an extra £500 per annum to their income? Now the answer was actually in her hand—the flavour of the joke had fled. It was tame, unkind, unnecessary.

She almost longed to tear it up unopened, but was loth to reveal her penitence to Sefton.

"Read it out," he said expectantly, an amused twinkle in his eyes.

"Wait a moment. Let us toss who shall open it—you or I!"

"Very well," replied Sefton, drawing a coin from his pocket.

"Heads, you; tails, me," said Miss Shirling. "Which is it?" as the shilling fell and rolled along the cloth.

"Heads!"

"Catch!"

With a sigh of relief she threw the letter at him. It fell in a dish of scrambled eggs.

He picked it out (the mauve seal still uppermost) and cut it open with a knife.

A strange look passed over his face as he read, his brow grew dark, the lines round his mouth deepened, the strong likeness to his father had never been more distinct.

Miss Shirling could not fail to notice the change. What could the letter say to upset him so? His hand shook, his lips were set, and the silence in the room became oppressive.

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As they drove through the green country.

"Well?" she asked softly, raising her eyebrows and leaning her elbows on the table.

Sefton rose and came across to her, the letter crushed in his clenched fist. He spoke with an effort, the flash of anger in his eyes.

But they grew pleading and wistful as they met hers.

"I want to ask you a favour, Tommy. Will you let me destroy this answer without your seeing it?"

"Why?"

"Because it comes from someone I know intimately—a woman. We both know her—myself more especially. It is not fair to her or the husband. Their secrets can be nothing to you. They are well-known people, and we had no right to make fun of their poverty for the sake of our own diversion. May I?" holding the sheet ready for destruction.

Who could resist his earnest tone? Certainly not Sarah Shirling. She nodded her head and turned again to the coffee pot.

"By all means," she murmured. "I was feeling desperately ashamed of myself when we tossed."

Sir Sefton tore the letter to shreds, and walked gloomily back to his seat, but he ate no breakfast, and hardly spoke.

Tommy's sympathetic eyes watched him furtively, seeing he was thoroughly perturbed, and tactfully refrained from pressing food upon him.

He read his own letters silently, perhaps something in them troubled him.

"Are you driving into the town this morning?" he asked.

"Yes. The cart is waiting for me now."

"May I come with you? I want to send a telegram."

"Certainly."

"And Tommy, I must go back to-day."

"*Go back*—go home—to Ravenscroft Park?"

"Yes; I have been away long enough. Things are going wrong in my absence—very wrong."

"I am so sorry. Any of the horses ill?" with anxious inquiry.

"Oh! no. But ——"

She waited for the solution of that "but," only it never came. Sefton thought better of it, and walked out of the room, leaving his sentence unfinished.

"I shall be ready in a minute," she cried, running for her hat.

Sefton snatched a cap in the hall, and went out to cool his boiling blood.

"How dare she!" he muttered fiercely between his clenched teeth, the overwhelming pride of his nature stinging and cutting him through and through. "Curse her!" the words were wrung forth involuntarily, the outcome of a sudden and awful hate for Georgina. At first he had tried to make the best of his wife, but gradually the strain of her presence told on his nerves, and this last action, the advertisement, inserted *sub rôsa* without his knowledge, awoke an unholy loathing in his soul.

"A paying guest at Ravenscroft Park! Bah! I would sooner break stones on the road. We may have sunk low, but not far enough down for that, not to harbour boarders under the dear old roof. It's enough to make my father turn in his grave."

Sefton thrust his hands in his pockets, and paced the gravel walk, indulging resentful thoughts, and rehearsing the scene he should have with Georgina, the forcible language wherewith to bring her to her senses. She did not realise her position, when she proposed to make a lodging house of her husband's home, and as to the county society, who would look at Georgina and her paying guest?

It only showed him what a fool the woman was—not to be trusted a yard out of his sight. Perhaps even now she was haggling over terms with possible customers.

So his thoughts ran on till Tommy's voice broke this unpleasant reverie with: "Are you ready?"

He started as if aroused from sleep, and took his place beside her in the dogcart.

"I've ordered you an early lunch. I suppose you will catch the two o'clock train?"

"Yes. Thanks for thinking of it."

The beauty of the morning was lost on Sefton as they drove through the green country. The telegram he wrote was addressed to Georgina, at Clapham, tersely worded, but to the point: "Return to-day. Must see you."

When Lady Ravenscroft opened it she was starting for a drive to Hyde Park with John Pluff in his landau.

"I call that real cheek!" exclaimed her cousin as she handed the message to him. "'E gives you no reason, just sends an order as if you was his servant instead of his missus—with no regard to your engagements or my convenience. Don't he know we are entertaining, and that you're my hostess, at least to the week end?"

"It's just a draw to get me back," said Georgina. "If it was anything of importance he might have spent sixpence extra in telling me."

"Oh! he's getting home sick at Lord Gattons, and wants

his little wifey, is that it?" asked Mr. Pluff, calming down. "Let him come and fetch you, Georgina, that's the way to treat a young husband. Make him run after you. It will do Sir Sefton a lot of good."

Lady Ravenscroft hesitated.

"I think if you don't mind, cousin John, I will go to-morrow; but to-day it is impossible, I have a business appointment with a lady—she is coming to see me while you are out at the Owens, and of course to-night I must go to Mrs. Humphery's musical evening. She would be quite broken-hearted if I failed her. I like her immensely, she is such a charming, affectionate little woman, and asked me to write to her when I go home."

"Please yourself, Georgy, but you know as far as I'm concerned the longer you stay the better. Perhaps you'll pop up again soon, and bring the young man with you, eh?"

"Perhaps."

Georgina spoke wistfully.

"I will write out a wire to Sefton 'Returning to-morrow, have engagement in town to-night.'"

"Add an 's,'" said John Pluff, "make it engagements, and we'll look in at the Gaiety first, and dine at a restaurant for a change."

"How I love life!" murmured Georgina, as they rolled away in the direction of Hyde Park Corner.

CHAPTER XI

The General's Widow.

That same afternoon Georgina sat in state in the large drawing-room, awaiting the advent of Mrs. Rathbone, who had answered her advertisement, and requested an interview. She adorned herself in costly array, smothered the tables, piano, mantelpiece, and chiffonier, with the loveliest flowers to be bought at Gérards, and practised her greeting and elevated hand-shake before the mirror.

Presently the sound of wheels reached her ear on the gravel without; the rustle of a skirt in the hall, and "Mrs. Rathbone" was announced in a sonorous voice by the footman.

A lady, feigning to be young, but past the bloom of girlhood, advanced with a simper. Her eyes were certainly strikingly magnetic, her face well moulded, but her whole appearance marred by a very palpable red wig, dressed high on the head. The coils and twists of brilliant hair were marvellous beyond description, while a tiny bonnet of lace and blossoms rested on the summit of a much curled fringe. Her figure was slimmer than nature intended, much compressed by whalebone, and the excessive tightness of a close fitting bodice.

"Lady Ravenscroft, I believe."

"Lady Ravenscroft, I believe," she said.

Georgina bowed and motioned her to a chair with the sweetest smile.

"It was just a chance my being in London. I return to Ravenscroft Park to-morrow. It is so much pleasanter to have a *personal* interview."

"Yes, indeed. Your advertisement was just the very thing that I was looking for—a comfortable home in a *good* family. I have not many friends in England, having lived abroad for a great many years. I must tell you, Lady Ravenscroft, that I am the widow of a General, and before my marriage was one of the Bottlemeads of Basingstoke."

She muttered these words proudly, and Georgina dared not expose her ignorance by asking who the Bottlemeads were.

Mrs. Rathbone's face grew keener.

"Your mention of 'county society,'" continued Mrs. Rathbone, "was especially attractive to me. I suppose you have a very large acquaintance?"

Georgina shifted her eyes uneasily.

"I fancy you will have no cause to complain," she murmured, her heart sinking, "though, of course, it is not gay like London. Since I came here my engagements have been numberless. I am perfectly worn out. No one could wish for a more ideal place than Ravenscroft Park—so stately, so imposing! My husband, as I dare say you know, is one of the oldest baronets. Lord Gatton's son stays a great deal with us."

Then the conversation drifted to the bathrooms and domestic arrangements.

Mrs. Rathbone desired to bring her maid, for which she would pay extra, informing Georgina that it was all her *own* money, left her by the Bottlemeads. The dear General had not a penny, but was very well connected, and a most charming man in society.

"How soon may I come?" asked Mrs. Rathbone. "I am living now at a South Kensington hotel, where I am not at all comfortable."

"I will consult my husband and let you know the day after to-morrow. The fact is, I have had several answers to my advertisement, and among them a lady who writes from the Sportswoman's Club in Piccadilly. My husband is very fond of sport, and there is good hunting in easy reach of Ravenscroft Park."

Mrs. Rathbone's face grew keener, and her voice more persuasive on scenting a rival.

"But I am sure, Lady Ravenscroft, *I* should give you far less trouble. These sporting women rise so early in the winter and want endless attention."

Lady Ravenscroft murmured: "Do you think so?" and rang for tea.

As the two ladies continued their conversation and Mrs. Rathbone had all but extracted a promise that she might settle in early the following month, John Pluff returned earlier than Georgina expected. The sight of him annoyed her beyond measure. She particularly did not wish "the lady of position" to meet this vulgarian under whose roof she was staying.

"Introduce me, Georgy, dear," he said, bowing low to the smartly-attired widow. "Delighted to make your

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acquaintance, Mrs. Rathbone," as Lady Ravenscroft muttered the name, inwardly fuming at his untimely appearance. "I've been stewing myself at a big At Home, left early, and here I am!" plumping his heavy figure on to a chair beside her and ogling with his ugly eyes.

The widow blushed and appeared delighted.

"What a charming house," she cooed. "I admired your garden, too, so much, as I drove in. Perhaps you would show me the grounds after tea? I am fond of shrubs and things. I see you have a great quantity."

Mr. Pluff beamed.

"It ought to be a decent garden, considering what I pay my head gardener."

"Oh! John," broke in Lady Ravenscroft for once daring to omit the "cousin." "I am sure his wages cannot possibly interest Mrs. Rathbone."

"Really you are quite mistaken, I want to hear *all* about it," as John Pluff swallowing down a second cup of tea, rose to escort her round the grounds. "I left my little sunshade in the hall, but please don't trouble to fetch it," as Mr. Pluff rushed away, and returned with a flimsy chiffon parasol, of a pink rose-tint that clashed with the red of her wig.

"I will come too," said Georgina, a determined ring in her voice.

"No, no, my dear, I positively won't let you," exclaimed Mr. Pluff. "You are looking just fagged out by this sweltering weather, and a rest will set you up for your dissipations to-night. I don't want to drag you about 'alf fainting. Bide a bit, and don't you make a fool of yourself. 'Ealth is 'ealth and we can't afford to despise it, can we, Mrs. Bathboney? I beg your pardon, but I get so mixed over names," as a horrified protest broke from the widow. But she smiled and forgave him, as she sailed away, murmuring that she *was* a Bottlemead once before the General—etc., etc. Georgina watched their departing figures with a sinking heart.

Was John Pluff never to be free from designing females? Had she herself placed a fresh danger in his path? Mrs. Rathbone *could* not be a nice person, or she would have been disgusted at the vulgarity of the ex-grocer. Georgina almost hesitated at taking her into her home, but the £500 a year was very tempting. Lady Ravenscroft sat watching

She moved back unperceived.

the clock, becoming momentarily more annoyed. How long they were? What could they find to talk about all this time? Eventually she peeped through the open window.

They were coming towards the verandah. She could hear the widow's affected voice, and her cousin's lusty laugh.

As they approached she moved back unperceived, but they had no intention of returning to Georgina, and passed on heedless of her frowns.

"I never saw such a bold-faced creature!" exclaimed Lady Ravenscroft, back at the window again. "If she has not lured that foolish old man away to the seat under the trees."

When about half-an-hour later Mrs. Rathbone returned to say good-bye, Georgina's manner had stiffened.

"I will write," she said simply, in reply to the widow's gushing intreaties that she would not keep her in suspense.

"I am so looking forward to sharing your beautiful home, Lady Ravenscroft. I see we shall get on."

When John Pluff returned from a final farewell with Mrs. Rathbone at the hall door, he asked his cousin bluntly "if she'd got the hump?"

"My dear John, what an expression! I am sure I could never be annoyed with *you*," laying a tender accent on the word, "but how you *could* have dangled round and danced attention on that Judy with a wig is past all comprehension."

"Wig!" cried Mr. Pluff, bridling up. "It was certainly nothing of the sort. I do not know if you were jealous, but the texture, the colour, and the quality, were quite uncommon. I have never seen anything so tasty and more to my liking."

These words were as thunderbolts to Georgina.

"Nevertheless, it *was* a wig," she muttered resolutely. "I would stake my last farthing on it."

"A most fascinating woman," replied her cousin, "and one I should like to know more of."

Oh! how bitterly Georgina repented asking her, inwardly reproaching and then justifying herself.

"How could I tell the creature would have that disgusting red hair and those brazen manners?" she thought as she went sadly to dress for dinner, thinking of the £500 a year she must now resign for the sake of her cousin's absurd fancy. "He shall not meet her at *my* house—the old idiot. I knew she was a serpent the first moment she returned his preliminary stare. My life won't be worth living till John has made a will in my favour, and is safely in his tomb."

Then she rang for one of John's servants to do her hair, and enjoyed herself for the rest of the evening at his expense.

Every now and again the thought of the woman in the red wig came to Georgina's mind, but she consoled herself by saying:

"I'll take the lady from the Sportswoman's Club instead. She will have got my letter by now, and I shall probably hear from her to-morrow. I don't suppose John will ever see Mrs. Rathbone again."

* * * * *

Sir Sefton Ravenscroft left Ermyn Way amidst general lamentations, Miss Shirling being the only one who did not drive him nearly distracted with pressing invitations to stop.

His mother and Eva argued that there could be no reason for his return yet, and Douglas counter-ordered the carriage, while Lady Gatton put off the lunch.

Now all this, though doubtless flattering, was highly trying to Sefton's temper.

Lord Gatton eventually came to the rescue, declaring he would not see a fellow so bullied, and accused his family of illegally detaining their guest.

Eventually Sefton found himself steaming back to his homestead made so distasteful by the presence of Georgina, with war in his heart against the paying guest.

Man-like, he had never thought to inform the servants of

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"I want a word with you, Georgina!"

his advent, thus he arrived to find the house in a general state of discomfort, and no dinner prepared. The worst of it was he could blame no one but himself.

Georgina's telegram annoyed him. He could not bear to think of his wife, Lady Ravenscroft, bandying the name about in John Pluff's circle. His pride suffered again, the pride that was destined to endure so much, and be driven finally beyond endurance.

The following morning another telegram came from Georgina stating the train she wished to be met by.

Sefton handed it to the servants, and went out riding.

"You've done me no end of a service coming here, and giving me the benefit of your title and 'igh bearing," said John Pluff, as he signed a farewell cheque for Lady Ravenscroft, before bidding her good-bye.

He saw her to the station, in order to buy a first-class ticket for her return.

"Here's a basket of apricots, some books, and papers," he said, placing his purchases in the railway carriage "Ta-ta, my love, and keep your pecker up. You are wonderfully strong and hearty, or I would not let you travel alone."

As she waved him a last adieu, her thoughts turned to the pecuniary profit of the visit.

"The penalty of his smacking kiss on the platform was worth a small fortune," she told herself. Embraces in public were always embarrassing, but from John Pluff they were positively outrageous. Still, after all, Georgina had no cause to complain.

Though she would not own it even to herself, she had secretly, in a half-ashamed, apologetic manner, enjoyed her stay at Clapham immensely.

The admiration she excited among her cousin's friends, and the respect with which they treated her, proved soothing in the extreme to Georgina's conceited nature. She recalled their honeyed, and frequently ungrammatical phrases, with a pleasurable tingling of her unblue blood.

She would repeat them for Sefton's benefit when he was in a good temper, and she could induce him to listen. There was also the scheme of the paying guest to unfold, and if one—why not many? The idea developed as the train sped onwards. She saw the disused rooms at Ravenscroft Park occupied with men for the shooting, and dreams of a fabulous income from these profitable people passed through her vision.

It was not till she stood alone on the country station looking for Sefton, who, however, was not forthcoming, that a nervous tremor disturbed Georgina's calm.

What if her husband's wretched pride frustrated all her plans?

Well then she would laugh at him, point out the folly of it, and gain her end victoriously.

No sign of Sefton as she drove up the long avenue, nor was he at home to greet her.

An hour later he came into her room, with a look on his face that boded ill for Georgina, already piqued and nettled by his neglect.

There were fresh streaks of grey in the young baronet's hair. Never before had she traced so vividly the resemblance he bore to Sir Reginald. Yet how different to the guilty but warm-hearted lover of departed days. The dark light in Sefton's eyes was as significant of hate as his father's had been of devotion. The contrast appalled the erect, defiant woman who advanced to meet her husband.

She opened her lips to speak, but his chilling expression froze her sentence.

He closed the door behind him sharply.

"I want a word with you, Georgina!"

(*To be continued.*)

RESULT OF POST-CARD COMPETITION.

No. 2.

The guinea this week has gone to Mr. W. Martinnant 212, Algernon Road, Ladywell, whose card bearing the correct answer was the first received. The sentence which appeared twice in *Short Stories* dated July 11th was "Sitting on the table swinging her legs," on page 34.

RESULT OF POST-CARD COMPETITION.

No. 3.

The guinea has been this week sent to Mr. J. R. Wilson 74, Ferndale Road, Leytonstone, whose post-card came first to hand. The longest word in the issue dated July 18th without a high or long letter was *unconsciousness*, page 74, line 8.

POST-CARD COMPETITION.

No. 5.

A guinea is offered to the first person within 100 miles of London who first points out the longest word in this issue (not including cover) in which the same letter occurs only once. A similar prize is offered to readers residing more than 100 miles from London. The competition closes on Friday, July 31st.

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PETRUS THE INTERPRETER.

Colonel Greet was one of those men who have been everywhere, seen everything and know everything. Not that he was conceited; on the contrary, he was the most unaffected man I have met. His father was English, his mother French. Brought up in France and England, he joined the English navy when a boy, and after having served five years or so he deserted and joined the French Army, retiring some years later with the rank of Captain.

Then he went roaming about all over the world, filling various positions—manager of a company in New York, explorer, engineer in charge, and much else besides until 1870, when he returned to France and took up arms against the Germans. He continued in the service of the French Goverment for years, and finally retired and settled down in Paris in 1890.

I made his acquaintance at a club in Paris. It was his delight to relate stories of his adventures to two or three of his club friends who were English. He spoke our language perfectly, with just a trace of the French accent and a dash of American humour which pleased them considerably. I only heard him narrate one incident and that he shall give in his own words as nearly as possible.

* * * * *

In 1885 I was in charge of a small station at Long-Sai. My duties were not particularly agreeable, for they consisted in dealing out summary justice to Annamite pirates and robbers. These malefactors were brought to my headquarters—a few huts—on the shore, and I had to see that the sentence of death was carried out. We had a small vessel anchored close to the shore, and some of the sailors were told off to act as hangmen.

It was quite a common sight to see five or six strong fellows swinging on the gallows; and although in such places and circumstances very little is thought of the life of a black, yet I soon got tired of it and felt that I should like to hear what these poor wretches had to say for themselves. Perhaps some were not so bad—even innocent—and I might get them off. But not one of them could speak a word of any language but their own, and I could find nobody to act as interpreter.

"I must have an interpreter!" I exclaimed one morning.

The boatswain of the vessel mentioned, who was acting as hangman-in-chief, and liked the job, suggested that I should apply to the French mission in the interior.

"Right you are, Jack; I'll try it!" I said.

He was English. I like your English sailors, they can be so confoundedly cool and independent.

The application was made and the priests promised to send a man along.

The next morning came a batch of seven malefactors for execution; objects of pity they were in appearance, and I longed for the arrival of my interpreter, so that I might have a chance of ascertaining whether they were really as bad as their record seemed to show. And just at that moment up came a long thin shadow of an Annamite, and, with a polite bow, handed me a letter.

This was the interpreter. The letter was full of his praises: he was a thoroughly honest young man; one of their most promising converts; would certainly rise in the world and so on. He would be useful to me as an interpreter, and they had christened him Petrus.

"I've got a treasure here!" thought I. And I decided to make use of him at once.

"Pierre," I said, addressing him in French, "ask that fellow when he committed his last murder."

The interpreter looked at me vacantly for a second or two and then shook his head.

"*Ego sum Petrus*" (I am Peter), he replied in excellent Latin.

It was my turn to stare at Petrus, who began to reel off some more of what sounded like the language of Cicero. Then the truth dawned upon me; the idiots at the mission had actually taught this fellow Latin! He couldn't utter a word of French!

I muttered some tolerably good strong French under my breath and proceeded to make the best of a bad job. I brushed up my best school Latin, and by means of that and a few gestures, I got along pretty well.

It is a relief to know something about the crimes of a man you are about to help into another world; and it is annoying to hear a man swearing at you and not be able to appreciate his remarks in the slightest degree. Petrus was a conscientious interpreter; he never tired in his endeavours to make me understand, and such swear words as were too strong for such a flexible language as Latin he did his best to explain. You can't translate swear words to advantage; the original and the translation bear the same relation to each other as a landscape and a bad photograph of it.

I signalled for the boatswain and his men to come on shore and do their work. The escort had orders to return as soon as they had handed over their prisoners. I told Petrus to make himself comfortable in one of the huts till I returned, and I went off into the interior to inquire into another little matter—my presence was not required, for I knew that Jack could do his work.

It was about three hours later when I returned. I saw the row of robbers hanging, and Jack smoking his pipe, seated outside one of the huts. For form's sake, I strolled up and counted the bodies. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, *eight*.

"Why, there are eight, Jack!" I exclaimed.

Jack took his pipe out of his mouth and pointed to each one as he counted.

"K'rect, cap'n! That the proper number!"

"But it isn't the proper number at all!" I shouted. At least, that was the meaning of what I shouted, but I put it a little more forcibly. "Why! Yes! *You've hanged the interpreter, Petrus!*"

"Petrus," repeated Jack stolidly. "There *was* one of 'em who knew a little English and kept saying: 'He go some Petrus.' But I soon gave him *Petrus!*"

It was useless to argue the point; all the talking in the world wouldn't bring him back to life. I was really sorry for the poor fellow, and I didn't care about the prospect of facing anyone from the mission. I was therefore glad for more than one reason when, on the following morning, I received orders to start for another post. I have often wondered whether the mission-folk ever learnt how high in the world poor Petrus actually did rise!

George Day.

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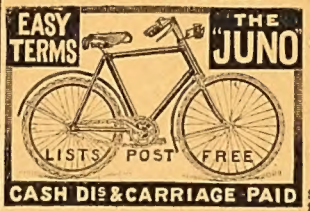

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THE TWO KINDS OF LUCK.

THE other day a lady I know was walking along Regent Street on a shopping excursion. Suddenly her eye caught the gleam of some bright thing on the pavement. She stooped and picked it up. It was a beautiful and valuable diamond pin. It had no doubt dropped out of some gentleman's scarf.

"What a stroke of good luck!" said the lady, as she stowed it carefully away in her purse.

"What a confounded stroke of bad luck!" said the owner, when he came to miss it.

So there you are. What is bad for one is good for another. One cries and another laughs over the same job. Your loss is my gain. You let fall a five-pound note on the floor of a 'bus and rush on your way. At Charing Cross station you want the money for fare. You put your finger and thumb in your waistcoat pocket. *Gone?* Sure as you live, it's gone. You have a cold chill. But the person who found (and kept) it feels warm as toast.

By the same token it was most unhappy and unfortunate for Mrs. Gray to have seven successive attacks of rheumatic fever; yet the fact that she did have them proved to be a lucky circumstance for James Greendale. I'll show you the way it came about.

Mrs. Gray's first attack was in March, 1888. She says she had dreadful pains all over her; and we can well believe it. Her joints were stiff and swollen, so she couldn't move her fingers. For seven weeks she was scarcely able to bear the touch of the bed-clothes. Her temperature was 104 degrees, and she was rubbed with embrocations and wrapped in cotton wool. She was confined to her bed for three months.

After this Mrs. Gray had rheumatism in a milder form, with so much pain at the heart that she was often afraid to go to bed. The doctor said her heart was diseased. From March, 1888, to July, 1893, she had six attacks of rheumatic fever, and had got so low she despaired of ever being better. Having described her experience thus far she ends her letter in these words:

"In August, 1893, I went to Cleethorpe, and whilst there I had my seventh and last attack. I was so bad I never expected to reach home again. The doctor at Cleethorpe said I would, at best, be an invalid for life. When finally I arrived home at Nottingham I was so altered that my friends hardly knew me. My bones almost protruded through my skin. I could just hobble about the house and that was all.

"In the following October I read in a pamphlet about how Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup had cured cases of rheumatism as bad as mine, and at once bought a bottle of Mr. Widdowson, the chemist, in Arkwright Street. In three days I felt better, and in less than two weeks I had no more pain. I kept on with the Syrup and soon felt like a new woman, gaining flesh and strength every day. Since then I have had no rheumatism or indigestion. I can eat anything, and do my work with ease. You can publish this and refer inquirers to me. (Signed) (Mrs.) Annie Elizabeth Gray, 77, Bunbury Street, Nottingham, March 14th, 1895."

Now for our friend James Greendale. His mother writes that he is eighteen years old, and last November (1894) began to suffer from rheumatism. His symptoms were practically the same as Mrs. Gray's, although he didn't suffer so long as she did. Still he was so bad that for weeks he wasn't able to get about. He had the same treatment (embrocations, etc.), and they failed with him as they had failed with her. Having told us all this, his mother adds:

"In January (1895) I was telling my neighbour, Mrs. Gray, of Bunbury Street, about my son, when she told me that after seven attacks of rheumatic fever, and being at death's door, she was perfectly cured by Mother Seigel's Syrup. So I got this medicine from Boot's Drug Stores, in Arkwright Street, and gave it to James. When he had taken two bottles he was well as ever, and went back to his work. He has had no rheumatism since. (Signed) Isabella Greendale, 76, Battey Street, Nottingham, March 15th, 1895."

Thus we see that what was a misfortune for Mrs. Gray was good fortune for James Greendale, for through her he found help. But above all it was good luck for both of them that Mother Seigel's Syrup cures rheumatism by curing the cause of it—chronic indigestion or dyspepsia.

And what is luck after all but the mysterious process by which we help or hinder one another? Write us your opinion.

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